

Blue Ridge Academy

**PARENT - STUDENT  
HANDBOOK**

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2026-2027

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# Blue Ridge Academy Mission and Vision Statement

## Mission Statement

The mission of Blue Ridge Academy is to provide a safe, collaborative and individualized learning experience in partnership with families and the community. Our independent study model allows our students opportunities to grow in an environment of inclusion, individualization and accountability. We will provide support and resources to students and families to ensure success towards their goals academically, emotionally, and socially.

## Vision Statement

The vision of Blue Ridge Academy is to support and empower students to demonstrate the values and skills that promote knowledge and critical thinking. Our students are prepared to thrive in and contribute to their communities with kindness, respect, integrity and purpose.

## Description of the Program

Blue Ridge respects a family's right to educate their children and strives to offer innovative, personalized learning options for all families. Our programs engage students with a truly personalized learning plan based on their own interests and specific learning needs while preparing them for success both now and in the future. Enrollment in our independent study program is tuition free.

Our programs provide students with many opportunities:

- Learn at home or on the go with options for flexible, standards based learning pathways using choices of curriculum, online platforms, and or bundled textbook programs
- Receive guidance, support, and assistance in person and virtually from your assigned credentialed Homeschool Teacher
- Optional field trips and community events
- Numerous and diverse vendor services and programs

## Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs)

At BR, we have goals for our students. They are known as our Schoolwide Learner Outcomes, and they represent what students at Blue Ridge Academy engage in and strive to achieve when they work through our program. The SLOs are a part of our school culture, and they reflect our school vision, the College and Career Readiness standards, the education of the whole child, and the values of our homeschool community. Teachers, students, and parents partner together throughout the year to review and reflect on student progress of the SLOs. SLOs are also an important part of the WASC process as they demonstrate our school's commitment to support student learning.

## Blue Ridge Academy Students are...

### ***Navigators of the Digital World***

*Navigators of the digital world who are proficient in the use of technology, media, and online resources*

### ***Self-Directed***

*Self-directed and motivated students who are able to set attainable goals to achieve academic success.*

**Personalized Learners**

*Personalized Learners who are able to thrive in the style of education that best fits their individual needs.*

**Independent Critical Thinkers**

*Independent Critical Thinkers who have the ability to problem solve, take ownership and apply their knowledge to a variety of problems.*

**Responsible Citizens**

*Responsible Citizens who demonstrate integrity and respect while actively seeking knowledge of local and global issues.*

**Effective Communicators**

*Effective Communicators who can thoughtfully articulate their thinking with confidence while collaborating with peers.*

## WASC Accreditation

The WASC process is designed to allow us to go through an in-depth self-study of our school, focusing specifically on organization, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school culture. We take a close look specifically at our high school students and their success. In addition, we identify and reflect on our progress towards our school-wide learning outcomes (SLOs.) The WASC cycle includes targeting our areas of strength and areas of growth and the creation of an action plan to address those areas to increase student achievement.

When a school becomes accredited, it:

- Certifies to the public that the school is a trustworthy institution of learning.
- Validates the integrity of a school's program and student transcripts.
- Fosters improvement of the school's program and operations to support student learning.
- Assures a school community that the school's purposes are appropriate and being accomplished through a viable educational program.
- WASC accreditation is important because the military often requires applicants to be from accredited schools and many school districts and universities will only accept credits from WASC accredited schools.
- Allows high school students' courses, grades, and units to be accepted at more colleges and universities.

## Enrollment Requirements

Required enrollment documentation includes: Proof of age, immunization record or      and proof of residence.

Student must reside within a county Blue Ridge Academy serves and provide proof of residency prior to enrollment. While attending BR, if a family moves they must submit a new proof of residence within ten days to [POR@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:POR@theblueridgeacademy.com).

**Proof of Residency (POR):** The best POR document is your most current utility bill (gas, water, or electric bill).

You can also use your most current property tax bill, mortgage statement, or lease agreement. If you have one of the extenuating circumstances below, you would need to complete the corresponding forms.

- Living with a friend or relative or Transitional living: [Parent Residency Affidavit Form](#)

Parent/Guardian with Active Military Orders: Affidavit Military Family

High school transcripts are necessary for determining proper class placement and for creating Individualized Graduation Plans. Transcripts should be submitted during the enrollment process and can be emailed to the Enrollment Department.

All information on the application must be true and correct. If misrepresentations are made or incorrect information is provided, the application may be considered as not meeting the requirements of the school and may result in the revocation or halting of enrollment until accurate information is provided.

Enrollment in Blue Ridge is contingent upon the student, parent, and teacher signing a Master Agreement Form (school contract) prior to the commencement of instruction and services. Parent and student will not have access to curriculum or planning amounts until the Master Agreement is signed and returned.

All Blue Ridge Academy students will be enrolled in their age appropriate grade level, unless a previous school has officially approved a retention or promotion.

Our school is a full-time, general education, independent study program; not a supplemental program or a part-time program. A student may not be dual enrolled in any other private or public school.

## The Parent/Guardian's Role

- Regularly support your student in daily learning during the school day, following the educational plan you and your Homeschool Teacher agree to.
- Treat all Blue Ridge Academy Homeschool Teachers and school staff with respect and professionalism.
- Ensure that communication between Homeschool teachers, staff, and Parent/Guardians focuses on the students' academic, emotional, and social needs and support, and is focused on the students' educational progress.
- Work in collaboration with your Homeschool Teacher, ensuring your student participates fully in their homeschool learning journey.
- Make sure your student participates in online or other recommended intervention supports, if needed, and as advised by your Homeschool Teacher.
- Complete and submit the monthly Student Learning Log (attendance log).
- Complete the STAR 360 online assessment 2-3 times per school year.
- Support student in attending state-mandated testing (SBAC, CAST, and Physical Fitness Test).
- Practice consistent communication to enhance collaboration through daily checks of email and phone.
- Attend scheduled Learning Period meetings with Blue Ridge Academy staff and student. (LP meetings are held in person or under specific circumstances may be temporarily approved to be held via web conference or on the phone)
- Attend other necessary meetings with Blue Ridge Academy staff and student. The meeting modality required (on the phone, via web conference, or in person), will be outlined by the school.
- Align all work, meetings, and progress monitoring with the school calendar to ensure all compliance items are fulfilled during the appropriate timeline.
- Ensure submission of all required student assignments and/or work samples as assigned by the Homeschool Teacher

It is vital that the parent/guardian follow the expectations listed above. Not maintaining these expectations

could result in your Homeschool Teacher beginning the non-compliance process.

## Student Behavioral Expectations

At BR learning takes place in a variety of settings. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Online learning sessions
- Public libraries, coffee shops, parks, community sites
- Vendor locations
- Blue Ridge Academy sponsored field trips, workshops, and social events

At Blue Ridge Academy, the primary focus is on student learning. Any behaviors that prevent all students from this focus will be reviewed and discussed with all parties involved. As a diverse community of learners, students must strive to work together in a setting of civility, tolerance, and respect for each other in an environment that does not distract from the mutual commitment to academic inquiry and reflection. To that end, the following student behavioral expectations have been established.

1. When participating in group dialogue, no one monopolizes discussions to the exclusion of others, either in terms of time or opinions expressed.
2. Conflicting opinions among members of a group are respected and responded to in a polite and respectful manner.
3. No side conversations or other distracting behaviors are engaged in during group discussions or presentations.
4. No offensive comments, language, or gestures are part of the learning environment.
5. Impersonating another person on an online platform is prohibited.
6. Use only your own username and password for any online platforms, and do not share these with anyone.
7. Do not post personal information in online environments (Phone Number, YouTube, Facebook, Physical Address, Email Address, Passwords, etc.)
8. All appropriate and respectful use of virtual platforms are maintained.

An infraction of these expectations that is deemed to be disruptive of the learning environment, is cause for removal of a student from an activity and may result in disciplinary action.

## School Policy Expectations

In addition to the guidelines outlined in this handbook, all parents and students are required to follow all Blue Ridge Academy guidelines and board-approved policies. These policies are designed to ensure a safe, inclusive, and effective learning environment for all. For a complete list of board-approved policies, please visit the [School Board page](#) of the Blue Ridge Academy website.

## Consequences

Staff shall enforce disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently. Discipline includes, but is not limited to, advising and counseling students, conferring with parents/guardians, and the use of alternative educational environments, suspension and expulsion. Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities unless otherwise agreed during the period of suspension or expulsion.

## School Calendar

As a public charter school, we offer families full-time, continued enrollment throughout the entire school year.



# ACADEMIC CALENDAR

2026 - 2027

August 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

September 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

October 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

November 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

December 2026						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

January 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

March 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

April 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

May 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

June 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

July 2027						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Date	Event/Holiday	Date	Event/Holiday	Date	Event/Holiday	Instructional Minutes
Aug. 19	First Day of School	Dec. 18-Jan. 1	Winter Break	Feb. 22	Lincoln's Birthday	Kindergarten 36000
Sept. 7	Labor Day	Jan. 15	Last Day of Semester 1	Mar. 26-Apr. 2	Spring Break	1st - 3rd 50400
Oct. 12	Indigenous Peoples' Day	Jan. 18	MLK Jr. Day	May 31	Memorial Day	4th - 8th 54000
Nov. 11	Veterans Day	Jan. 19	Second Semester Begins	June 2	Last Day of School	9th - 12th 64800
Nov. 20-27	Thanksgiving Break	Feb. 15	Presidents' Day			Instructional Days 176

## Curriculum Choices & Learning Paths

Blue Ridge's academic program is designed to be flexible and customizable, while maintaining state standards regarding rigor and content. Working together, credentialed teachers and parents design a learning plan for each student that can incorporate:

- A variety of curriculum options and platforms
- Academic support including interventions
- A child's optimal learning modalities
- Seemingly limitless enrichment resources, materials, and experiences
- School sponsored learning enrichment, field trips, and student activities
- A blend of virtual and in-person support

If you are looking for an engaging, learning platform, explore the options below managed by our Curriculum Department. Other curriculum options such as Timberdoodle, Bookshark, Moving Beyond the Page, , and many more can be ordered through the [Procurify System](#).

Blue Ridge Academy curricula include learning paths and platforms designed to address the needs of all students including:

- English Language Learners
- Students in Special Education
- Students with 504 Plans
- Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Youth
- Homeless/Foster Youth
- Gifted & Talented

To ensure students enjoy learning and feel prepared for life after school, our Blue Ridge curriculum department works closely with partners to offer the opportunity to enroll in engaging online platforms and we encourage you to explore these options below. As well, students are provided with access to supplemental yearly subscriptions such as MobyMax, BrainPop, NetTutor, Touch-Type, Read Spell, and others. Other homeschool-friendly curriculum options can be ordered through our Enrichment department.

## Objectionable Materials

Blue Ridge Academy aims to remove any barriers to learning so that all students are able to make personal and academic progress. If your family finds certain lessons or materials in a particular unit of study to be objectionable for various personal reasons, please contact your Homeschool Teacher and she/he will work with you to identify alternative lessons to meet the lesson objectives.

## Curriculum: Transitional Kindergarten - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

Transitional Kindergarten through 8th grade students enrolled in Blue Ridge Academy have many options to choose from, including various online curriculum that may be project, text, or video-based, offered as synchronous or asynchronous, and bundled for a cost-effective option. Whatever the need, we offer homeschool-friendly options for creating a personalized learning path. . A discussion with your credentialed Homeschool Teacher and a review of our curriculum flyers will help pinpoint how to gain the most from your curriculum, based on your student's need. Below is a sample of options available to students based on their grade level. Please note that these options are not exhaustive.

TK -2nd Grade:

- [Acellus](#)
- [Branches Learning](#)
- [Bridgeway Stepping Stones](#)
- [FlexPoint Virtual School](#)
- [iLead Online](#)
- [Lincoln Empowered](#)
- [McGraw Hill](#)
- Other - Can be ordered through the [Procurify System](#)

3rd-5th Grade:

- [Acellus](#)
- [ALEKS](#)
- [Branches Learning](#)
- [Bridgeway Stepping Stones](#)
- [FlexPoint Virtual School](#)
- [iLead Online](#)
- [Lincoln Empowered](#)
- [McGraw Hill](#)
- [WriteAtHome](#)
- Other - Can be ordered through the [Procurify System](#)

6th-8th Grade:

- [Acellus](#)
- [ALEKS](#)
- [ASU Prep Digital](#)
- [Blue Tent Online](#)
- [Branches Learning](#)
- [Bridgeway Bridge](#)
- [BYU Independent Study](#)
- [Edmentum EdOptions Academy](#)
- [eDynamic Learning](#)
- [FlexPoint Virtual School](#)
- [High School Math Live \(HSML\)](#)
- [iLead Online](#)
- [Imagine Edgenuity](#)
- [LanguageBird](#)
- [Lincoln Empowered](#)
- [LIVE Online Math](#)
- [McGraw Hill](#)
- [Mr. D Math](#)
- [Roseta Stone Silver](#)
- [Thinkwell](#)
- [Williamsburg Learning](#)
- [WriteAtHome](#)
- [YaizY](#)
- Other - Can be ordered through the [Procurify System](#)

## Curriculum: High School

BR offers an Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP) for all high school students and the curricular options to meet course requirements of the IGP. Upon enrollment, students will discuss and create an IGP with their Homeschool teacher or a High School Counselor, based on the student's short and long-term academic goals. BR provides high school students with various homeschool curricula and vendor options to meet all academic and learning needs including rigorous college prep A-G and AP courses. Students have the freedom to choose instructor-led courses or the ability to work from our A-G Guides:

9th-12th Grade:

- [ALEKS](#)
- [ASU Prep Digital](#)
- [Blue Tent Online](#)
- [Branches Learning](#)
- [Bridgeway Elite](#)
- [BYU Independent Study](#)
- [Edmentum EdOptions Academy](#)
- [eDynamic Learning](#)
- [FlexPoint Virtual School](#)
- [High School Math Live \(HSML\)](#)
- [iLead Online](#)
- [Imagine Edgenuity](#)
- [LanguageBird](#)
- [LIVE Online Math](#)
- [McGraw Hill](#)
- [Mr. D Math](#)
- [Roseta Stone Silver](#)
- [Silicon Valley High School \(SVHS\)](#)
- [Thinkwell](#)
- [UC Scout On Demand](#)
- [VIZIO Makeup Academy](#)
- [Williamsburg Learning](#)
- [WriteAtHome](#)
- [YaizY](#)
- Other - Can be ordered through the [Procurify System](#)

## Graduation Requirements

High school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements are not the same. Course selection should be based on academic, career, and personal interest. Student interests and goals should guide the path through high school.

College admission requirements will vary from school to school, it is recommended that students check admission requirements before applying to their college of choice. Students can always reach out to their Counselor if they have questions about graduation requirements or the college admission process. Graduation requirements information can also be found on our website [here](#).



# Blue Ridge Academy Graduation Requirements

<b>Social Studies</b>	30 credits required / 6 semesters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 year of US History (10 credits)</li> <li>• 1 year of World History (10 credits)</li> <li>• 1 semester of Government (5 credits)</li> <li>• 1 semester of Economics (5 credits)</li> </ul>	
<b>English</b>	30 credits required / 6 semesters	
<b>Math</b>	20 credits required / 4 semesters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Algebra 1 must be completed</li> </ul>	
<b>Science</b>	20 credits required / 4 semesters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 year of Physical Science (10 credits)</li> <li>• 1 year of Life Science (10 credits)</li> </ul>	
<b>Visual &amp; Performing Arts or World Language or Career and Technical Education (CTE)</b>	10 credits required / 2 semesters	
<b>Electives</b>	90 credits required / 18 semesters	








= 10 credits / 2 semesters

\* Please note that once a subject area graduation requirement has been fulfilled, all excess credits will be rolled over to the Electives category

Suggested Course Sequence			
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English 9</li> <li>• Algebra 1</li> <li>• Physical Science <i>or</i> Earth Science</li> <li>• Elective / Elective</li> <li>• Elective / Elective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English 10</li> <li>• World History</li> <li>• Math</li> <li>• Biology</li> <li>• Elective /Elective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English 11</li> <li>• US History</li> <li>• World Language <i>or</i> Visual &amp; Performing Arts</li> <li>• Elective / Elective</li> <li>• Elective / Elective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economics <i>and</i> Government</li> <li>• Elective / Elective</li> <li>• Elective / Elective</li> <li>• Elective / Elective</li> <li>• Elective / Elective</li> </ul>

# University of California (UC) & California State University (CSU)

## A-G University Bound Subject Requirements

<b>A - History / Social Science</b> <small>2 years required</small>	
<b>B - English</b> <small>4 years required</small>	
<b>C - Math</b> <small>3 years required 4 years recommended</small>	
<b>D - Laboratory Science</b> <small>2 years required 3 years recommended</small>	
<b>E - Language other than English</b> <small>2 years required 3 years recommended</small>	
<b>F - Visual &amp; Performing Arts</b> <small>1 year required</small>	
<b>G - College- Preparatory Elective</b> <small>1 year required</small>	



= Required



= Recommended

### 4-year College Entrance Requirements

Students who plan to apply to a 4-year college right after high school graduation should plan to meet “a- g” requirements. These requirements are mandatory for students who apply to the CSU or UC systems, and recommended for students who plan to apply to private and out-of-state colleges and universities. The “a-g” requirements are summarized below:

Students who plan to apply to the UC or CSU systems will need to take courses that are “a-g” approved. All “a-g” courses must be completed with a grade of C or better. There are alternative ways to meet “a-g” requirements through testing and community college courses. Students can check the progress of their “a-g” requirements by consulting with their counselor.

Subject requirements will vary for private and out-of-state colleges and universities. However, most students who are eligible for UC admission and fulfill the “a-g” requirements will also likely meet the admission requirements for most of the private and out-of-state colleges and universities.

Students should also plan to take the SAT or ACT. SAT Subject Tests are usually optional; however, students who are applying to specific departments or highly selective schools will want to check with the admissions office of the college or university of interest to verify requirements.

For more information, please visit the sites below:

- ["A-G" Requirements](#)
- [Blue Ridge Academy A-G Course List](#)
- [SAT Information](#)
- [ACT Information](#)

## High School Elective Credit for 7th & 8th Graders

Blue Ridge Academy will grant high school elective credit for high school math, world languages, and CTE courses taken by 7th and 8th grade students. As a parent choice school, we allow 7th and 8th graders to take high school courses, but it is important to consider how taking courses in middle school will affect high school and college before choosing this option for your student. Families should read our school's [Middle School Guidelines](#) and communicate with their HST about their intentions.

## Academic Expectations

### TK-8th Grade

Families choose to enroll at BR for a variety of reasons, but at the cornerstone of each decision is a supportive partnership between the family and their chosen/assigned credentialed Homeschool Teacher. Our school provides the tools and guidance for students to experience a high quality education by providing access to personalized curriculum and instruction. Students need to be engaged in learning each school day. Families and credentialed Homeschool Teachers work together to provide support for struggling students. Families are required to meet with their credentialed Homeschool Teacher once every 20 school days.

### High School

All high school students enrolled at BR will discuss and create an Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP) with their Homeschool Teacher. Short and long term goals will be created based on the needs of each student. A guidance counselor is also assigned to each student and will review the IGP. Students must be enrolled in a minimum of four courses each semester and should complete a minimum of five courses each semester (25 units) to remain on track for graduation. Students are expected to meet with their teacher regularly to ensure adequate progress is made toward completing courses.

## I CAN Statements

I CAN statements are family friendly guides that can be used to help your family and ensure your students are on track for their grade level. All learning objectives for Math, Language Arts, Science and Social Studies are provided, written in family-friendly language. I CAN statements help make grade level learning targets clear for families and they address the standards students of the same grade learn in all public schools.

## Academic Integrity

Blue Ridge Academy urges students to conduct themselves ethically and honorably. It is expected that the grade a student earns is based upon work that the student has completed.

By definition, Academic Integrity is the moral code or ethical policy of academia. This includes values such as avoidance of cheating or plagiarism; maintenance of academic standards; honesty and rigor in academic work.

The following behaviors may be considered as acts that do not uphold Academic Integrity:

- Plagiarism from books, online sources, AI tools, etc.
- Talking during a proctored exam
- Copying another student's test/assignment
- Allowing others to copy your work
- Exchanging assignments with other students (either handwritten or computer generated)
- Using a computer or other means to translate an assignment/part of a World Language assignment to another language
- Using summaries or commentaries (Cliff Notes, Spark Notes) in lieu of reading the assigned materials
- Submitting purchased papers
- Altering a grade (on a computer, on a report card, on an assignment)
- Taking an exam for someone else
- Using bribery/blackmail/threats

Any student known to have acted without academic integrity will be subject to disciplinary action in the following manner:

- **First offense:** A grade of F and/or 0% on the assignment/exam with a chance to resubmit within 1 week and parent/guardian notification
- **Second offense:** A grade of F and/or 0% on the assignment/exam with no resubmit and conference with parent/guardian
- **Third offense:** A grade of F in the class, in person conference, and placement on Academic Probation for 1 year
- **Fourth offense:** Disciplinary hearing; possible expulsion from the school

Students placed on Academic Probation may be subject to the following consequences:

- Copy of cheating referral placed in permanent cumulative file
- Proctored unit tests and finals by a Blue Ridge Academy staff member
- Restricted from participating in school activities (field trips, prom, graduation)
- Ineligible to receive letters of recommendation from staff and faculty
- May restrict activities requiring approval, such as but not limited to, work permits, concurrent enrollment, enrichment ordering and other

## Report Cards

### Report Cards - TK-8th

At Blue Ridge Academy, students, parents, and teachers work in partnership to design personalized learning plans and goals. The credentialed Homeschool Teacher affirms the learning plan and is guided by the I CAN statements.

Report Cards are not required to be filed in your student's cumulative file for grades TK-8, but families may request them to be added from their teacher. While TK-8 report cards are not required, they are sometimes necessary for other student endeavors such as sports teams, insurance, government verifications, etc. Please consider your family participation in these types of activities when deciding to request a report card in your student's Cumulative Record or not. We highly recommend that parents of 7th and 8th grade students request a report card to be filed in your student's Cumulative Record as this type of documentation is frequently requested when transitioning into a traditional high school setting. Parents of TK-8<sup>th</sup> grade students have two (2) Report Card options (Option A is the default if you do not make a selection):

- **Option A:** I would like my teacher to create a Report Card and I would like a copy filed in my student's Cumulative Record.
- **Option B:** I would like my teacher to create a Report Card and I would NOT like a copy filed in my student's Cumulative Record.

Your Homeschool Teacher will communicate directly with you to ask which option you would like for Report Cards. Each year, parent/guardian must share with their Homeschool Teacher if they require Option B, as it does not transfer from year to year.

### Review of Student Work

Families share all of the learning that has occurred during their monthly meetings with their teachers and provide this portfolio of work in all subjects to their teacher throughout the year. Teachers work with the family to review and reflect on student learning. Teachers will use the shared information to determine mastery of standards and match these to the I CAN statements.

It is our school's policy and practice that individual student data is never shared with anyone other than the parent and teacher. The data is used solely to show grade level and school-wide trends for accreditation purposes.

### AWRs-Assignment and Work Records

We work collaboratively with our families to create and discuss assignments each Learning Period using the Assignment and Work Record process (AWR). The HST and family review the specific needs and goals for each student. The goal is to create an individualized curricular path, via the monthly assignments, that work toward successful completion of educational goals by the end of the school year.

### Report Cards - High School

All 9th -12th grade students are required to have a report card issued at the conclusion of each semester and are unable to opt out. Semester report cards will be based on progress made in the student's assigned high

school courses.

Students in high school earn letter grades. High school students need to complete requirements and lessons as outlined by their Homeschool Teacher or by the High School Content Teacher, as applicable.

The chart below shows the grading rubric for quality of assigned work:

Percentage	Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59 and below	F

### Attendance

- Parent/guardian is responsible for ensuring that their child is actively engaged in learning each school day.
- Monthly Student Learning Log (Attendance Log) must be signed and submitted to your Homeschool Teacher at the end of each month. The Homeschool Teacher will communicate with individual families/students on the collection process of this document.
- The following are acceptable reasons for not logging attendance: prolonged illness, hospitalization, bereavement, family emergency, natural disaster. In such cases the absences would be considered excused. Some instances may require verification, such as a doctor's note, to be provided to your teacher.
- Homeschool Teachers will be knowledgeable of student progress, learning, and engagement in school. This can occur at regularly scheduled meetings, calls, emails, and or other methods.
- If the Homeschool Teacher is unable to obtain knowledge of the progress, learning, and engagement in school, attempts to contact will be documented and a non-compliance letter may be sent. After multiple failed attempts to contact a family, the school may deem that enrollment in Blue Ridge Academy is not in the best interest of the student and he/she may be subject to withdrawal. (Refer to Non-Compliance Policy on page 32)

### Withdrawing Your Student From Blue Ridge Academy

To withdraw your student from Blue Ridge Academy please provide your Homeschool Teacher with the following information:

- Last date of Blue Ridge Academy attendance
- Name of school or school district your student will be enrolling in
- Reason for withdrawal
- Work Sample(s) from the final date of attendance with Blue Ridge Academy

Once this information is received, your Homeschool Teacher will assist you with the materials return process and finalizing any outstanding compliance items. All school property must be returned to Blue Ridge Academy.

## Special Education

Blue Ridge Academy personnel are committed to identifying and serving students who have exceptional needs and are eligible to receive special education supports and services. Our commitment is based on the belief that all students shall have access to a high quality public education.

In cooperation with the Los Angeles County Charter SELPA, Blue Ridge Academy will work to ensure that a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is provided to all eligible students with exceptional needs in the student's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Specifically, Blue Ridge Academy will comply with all applicable state and federal laws in serving students with disabilities, including, but not limited to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and any other civil rights enforced by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and applicable special education policies and practices of the SELPA.

For more information, please review the full [Special Education Policy](#)

### Common Questions

Following are the most common questions that the special education department receives from families regarding special education at Blue Ridge Academy. Please review and contact the department which serves your child if you would like to discuss these topics further.

#### What is Special Education?

Special Education is specially designed instruction, supports, and services to meet the unique educational needs of individuals with disabilities, which cannot be met in the general education program. It is an integral part of the total public education system, and special education services are provided:

- In a way that promotes maximum interaction between students with and without exceptional needs;
- At no cost to families; and
- Include a full range of program options to meet the educational and service needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE). --California Education Code Section 56031

#### Who should you contact when you believe your child may need additional academic support?

Your assigned Homeschool Teacher is the best person to initially discuss any academic questions or concerns with. Your Homeschool Teacher will most likely recommend interventions and/or accommodations for you to use with your child if appropriate.

In the event that you and your Homeschool Teacher need additional guidance in supporting your child, you may request for a Student Study Team (SST) meeting be held. This meeting will document the concerns of school staff and families, identify interventions attempted, and possibly recommend additional interventions. Interventions should be attempted for six to eight weeks and a second SST meeting should be held to document the student's response to intervention. Depending on the successful implementation of the intervention, the SST will contact the Assessment Team for additional support or recommendations.

#### How is it determined that a student is eligible to receive special education?

Assessments are the basis for Special Education eligibility, placement, and service decisions. The assessments will be done by professionals who have had specialized training and required certification/licensure. Please note: General Education teachers and parents, who know the students well, play a critical role in understanding a student's academic strengths and struggles and are essential in the process of documenting/identifying areas of needs.

When the school receives a referral for special education, the child's legal guardian will be sent an assessment plan that details the types of assessments being proposed. The child will receive a "full and individual initial evaluation" to determine if the child has a disability and what the child's educational needs are. A full evaluation means that the child shall be assessed in all areas of suspected disability within 60 calendar days of parental consent received by Blue Ridge Academy via signature on an assessment plan (timelines adjusted for student breaks over five consecutive days).

### **What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?**

An IEP is a contractual, legal obligation, on the part of the school stating how the school plans to assist a student once they have been determined eligible for Special Education supports and services. The IEP document is written following the determination of a student's need and eligibility for special education.

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that an IEP include a "statement of measurable annual goals" which allow the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability." The IEP team develops the IEP document annually and identifies the child's needs, annual goals, objectives, adaptations, services and placement.

### **What is the role of the parent in an IEP meeting?**

Parents are encouraged to participate in the IEP meeting by providing information on which supplementary aids and services, program accommodations, and support for the parent's role as learning coach are needed to help the child progress toward attaining progress in general education curriculum and on their IEP goals. Please speak with your Special Education teacher further regarding the structure of IEP meetings and if you have any questions or concerns.

### **How are special education services provided at our independent study school?**

Students with IEPs are required to participate in special education services as indicated in their IEP documents.

- Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) is delivered virtually and is taught by experienced and credentialed special education teachers. The format of these sessions are determined by the student's IEP team and based on their academic IEP goals.
- Related Special Education services, such as occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, etc. may be provided by qualified District staff or via non-public agencies (NPA) contracted with Blue Ridge Academy. NPAs have a certification with the California Department of Education to work with school aged students and they are carefully selected by Blue Ridge Academy.

### **May a family maintain the same special education NPA Providers/individual therapists, if they enroll in Blue Ridge Academy and year to year?**

Each NPA oversees the scheduling and availability of their services providers. Our Special Education Department will confirm an NPA's certification with the California Department of Education, establish a contract with that NPA to start services.

Please note: The Special Education Department is happy to work with families, however we are not able to guarantee that they may maintain the same NPA providers/individual therapists.

### **Should Special Education Teachers be included in the development of a student's education plan, designed by the Homeschool Teacher?**

Whenever possible, it is recommended that a Special Education Teacher be included in the development of a student's education plan, which is designed by the learning coach and Homeschool Teacher. While it is not a requirement, the involvement of the Special Education Teacher provides an opportunity for the team to get a different perspective on how to help support a student's needs, challenges, and strengths.

### **Shall your Homeschool Teacher collect work samples for students with an IEP?**

Blue Ridge's Work Sample policy is the same for all students.

## **Instructional Planning Amounts**

### **Program Description**

At Blue Ridge Academy, we focus on Personalized Learning, a philosophy that truly puts every student first by supporting them in honoring and exploring their unique skills, special gifts, talents, and aspirations. In order to allow families flexibility on their personalized learning path, BR establishes a planning amount for students for educational items and services per full school year. Parents and students are not guaranteed to receive any educational items and services up to and equal to this planning amount, as a Homeschool Teacher and the Superintendent must approve all requests. The planning amount is also not a mandatory cap limiting the Charter School's ability to provide necessary educational services to students (e.g., pursuant to a student's individualized education program). Families utilize this planning amount to work with their teachers to carefully select educational products, such as curriculum, technology items, supplemental enrichment materials, field trip opportunities, and services, such as enrichment lessons and classes to fit their goals, learning plans, and subjects outlined in their Master Agreement. The Charter School developed this planning amount to help ensure the school provides educational items and services aligned with its budget and to help ensure fair and equal treatment of students, to the extent consistent with individual needs. All orders must be secular and are approved by your Homeschool Teacher and/or our Enrichment Staff based on a school approved vendor list and school approved Enrichment Guidelines. Instructional Planning Amounts cannot be transferred between students.

#### **Product:**

- Academic Enrichment Materials
- Curriculum
- Technology Items\*
- Educational Field Trips

#### **Service:**

- Fine Art Lessons & Classes
- Performing Art Lessons & Classes
- Academic Enrichment Classes
- Physical Education Classes
- Tutoring Services
- Driver's Education Courses
- Cooking Classes
- Gardening Classes
- Reading and Writing Classes
- STEM Classes

*\*The Technology Acceptable Use Acknowledgement must be signed in order to receive the technology equipment. All families receive this form through email at the beginning of the year.*

All families will have access to the list of approved vendors/service providers and product/material items. This list is updated on a daily basis throughout the school year.

Instructional Planning Amounts are state funds and are not the property of the parent, nor is any material ordered through these planning amounts. All materials ordered through BR with state funding are the property of BR. Materials are loaned to enrolled students for educational purposes only. The items must be returned to the school at the commencement of the withdrawal process. All materials must be returned to BR within thirty days. Families may be billed for any items not returned and student transcripts may be held until all materials are returned.

### How to Request Services/Products

1. Log into the Blue Ridge Academy Procurify platform to request any service or product.
2. The first time a family uses a vendor for service, they will need to sign and submit a mega waiver form.
1. If families are requesting a service, an Enrichment Certificate will be created and sent via email to the parent, HST, and vendor. Students are not able to start services without an Enrichment Certificate.
2. Families will present the Enrichment Certificate to the vendor.
3. Each vendor will invoice Blue Ridge Academy for the services listed on the certificate.
4. Families must place an order for services prior to the start of services. Back dated service orders will not be approved.
5. Blue Ridge Academy pays vendors directly. Parents should not pay vendors for Blue Ridge Academy Student services as we cannot provide payment/reimbursement to families.
6. To request technology products offered exclusively by our Technology Department (i.e. laptops, MacBooks, tablets, and accessories), please visit the Tech Catalog on our Procurify system. This catalog offers a curated list of current items which require configuration or standardization.

### How to Request New Vendors

- If a family would like to use a vendor that is not currently on the approved vendor list, a vendor request can be submitted using this link: [Vendor Request Survey](#) Please note that survey submissions are not guaranteed approvals.
- Vendors must meet criteria that include but are not limited to one or more of the following:
  - Services provided must be non-sectarian
  - Vendor may not be located at or affiliated with a school, preschool, or daycare facility
  - Services may not be provided to relatives (e.g., child, grandchild, niece/nephew, sibling, etc.) of the vendor (or its employees)
  - Vendor must be recognized as a valid California business with a social media, web page, or

another online business site with verifiable services

- Product vendors do not need to be pre-approved.
- Our Vendor Team will contact the vendor.
- All services must be approvable service per the Blue Ridge Academy Enrichment Guidelines.
- The vendor approval process is largely dependent on how quickly a vendor returns their application and supporting documents. The process could take a couple days to a couple of weeks. Our goal is to have the vendor approval process completed within two weeks.

Blue Ridge students are expected to comply with all Board approved policies. Please review the full [Educational Materials and Restitution Policy](#).

## Tech Catalog

Choosing technology can be overwhelming. Our Tech Catalog helps simplify your selection by providing a curated list of qualified devices, items, and accessories. All items offered meet internal standards of quality, performance, value, availability, and support. These items can be obtained with Instructional Planning Amounts.

Some technology items (e.g. laptops, MacBooks, tablets and printers) require specific configurations, must meet certain standards or be purchased through select suppliers, channels, or agreements.

### Tech Costs

Most Tech Catalog items are business-class devices and are not found in local retail stores, so be certain you are comparing the exact same models and specs. Remember, all taxes (ex. sales tax) and fees (ex. shipping, CA e-waste disposal) are also included in the price you see. Unfortunately, we are not able to price match.

Tech Catalog pricing also includes software and device licenses, school compliance features, management services, enhanced warranties and damage protection, solid state drives (SSD), protective cases, asset tagging and inventory, packaging materials, shipping both ways, and lifetime support for the device is standard. These items are factored into the Planning Amount cost of Tech Items.

The following limits have been placed for tech devices assigned to students and families:

- 1 computer per student
- 1 tablet per student
- 1 printer per student

Technology devices are expected to be usable for 3 years or more, this includes laptops, Chromebooks, MacBooks, and tablets. Prior approval is required to order a similar device within the 3 years. Please save the original box the device came in to use upon return.

If you are ordering a new similar type of device, like a laptop for a laptop, you need to send the old device back to

the tech department prior to receiving the new device. Please reach out to the [helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com) for a shipping label to send the old device back.

If the device is damaged or broken within 3 years, please put in a help desk ticket and we will review the device to see if it can be repaired or a loaner provided.

## How to place an order

Tech devices are now available through the Procurify System and can be ordered in the same fashion as other enrichment items. Please review the tech options on your Procurify account.

### Public Wifi Access

All Blue Ridge Academy student devices have a 3rd party content filter on them to block out malicious websites and harmful or inappropriate content. Student devices with the content filter cannot connect to public wifi connections with a captive portal (redirect page), examples include Starbucks, Panera, and Marriott. Alternatively, devices can connect to public wifi that does not have a captive portal when connecting.

## Tech Department Returns

All Tech items are the property of BR and returns can be submitted to our Technology Department. Please contact us for detailed directions on how to return item(s).

The school is unable to sell any enrichment/technology items to families.

For Tech support or questions, please call or email:

[helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com) , (661) 379-6145

## Parent-Student Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy

Blue Ridge Academy is committed to providing our students with access to technology, information, and digital resources while fostering safe, responsible, and ethical learning environments. The Charter School is committed to upholding important security, privacy, and safety regulations, protocols, and standards. Users of the Charter School's devices, networks, accounts, and other resources must adhere to the Charter School's policies. Users are also expected to fully comply with local, state, and federal regulations. Failure to adhere to these policies or regulations may result in discipline, legal action, or other remedies determined to be within the rights of the Charter School. Relevant regulations include (but are not limited to):

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

The purpose of the Blue Ridge Academy Governing Board approving this Parent-Student Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Define Technology Use Terms and Phrases
2. Identify the User Responsibility
3. Outline Acceptable Use of Resources
4. Outline Unacceptable Use of Resources
5. Outline the Expectation of Privacy
6. Define Cyberbullying
7. Outline Stolen Technology Procedures
8. Outline the Student Departure Procedures
9. Identify the Disclaimers and Acknowledgements
10. Establish the User Agreement

Definitions:

- **School or Organization or We** – the Charter School
- **ITD** – Blue Ridge Academy Information Technology Department
- **You or Your or I** - the parent/guardian, student, and signer of this Acceptable Use of Technology Policy
- **Resources** - devices, systems, services or networks owned, operated or issued by the Charter School.
- **User** - any person(s) accessing or utilizing the Charter School’s resources that is not a resource operator
- **AUP** – Parent-Student Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy

**2. User Responsibilities:** Access to the Charter School’s technology, resources, and support is a privilege which offers a wealth of educational benefits. To maintain these privileges, all users must agree to, learn about, and comply with all information within this AUP document.

- You agree to learn about and comply with all information outlined in this AUP document
- Persons to whom items are assigned are expected to exercise reasonable care to protect those items against damage, loss and theft. “Reasonable care” is defined as:
  - Never leaving items unattended
  - Never lending, giving or releasing items to a person other than an employee of the ITD or Charter School
  - Never removing protective accessories or features (e.g. cases, bumpers)
  - Keeping items away from dangerous conditions (e.g. liquids, heat sources, unstable surfaces or items) and preventing actions which promote damage beyond normal wear and tear
- You must immediately report damaged, lost, or stolen items/resources. Items reported stolen or missing will require a police report.
- Parents/guardians are expected to provide supervision and monitor device/Internet access and usage.
- You are expected to make a reasonable effort to protect your passwords, information and data.

- You are obligated to notify the ITD of continued access to resources beyond student departure (e.g. withdrawal, graduation, expulsion) in the event the ITD has not contacted you to do so.
- Items, devices and resources issued by the Charter School are School property and must be returned or relinquished to the Charter School upon request.

### **3. Acceptable Use of Resources:**

- All of the Charter School-issued accounts are intended solely for use by the person authorized to use the account.
- When sharing or exposing personal information or data online, extreme caution should be exercised.
- Any information or communication accessible via any of the Charter School networks should be assumed private property.
- The Charter Schools reserves the right to verify whether specific uses of the Charter School technology or networks are consistent with this acceptable use policy.
- The Charter School is bound by certain licensing agreements. Users are expected to comply with those agreements.
- Educational and instructional use as related to the Charter School only.

### **4. Unacceptable Use of Resources:**

- All commercial or personal for-profit usage is prohibited.
- The access, use or transmission of objectionable material (e.g. materials that are obscene, bullying, profane, lewd, threatening, disrespectful, hateful, pornographic) is prohibited.
- Violation of any local, state, or federal laws as well as School, board or administrative policies are prohibited. (e.g. Federal copyright laws - [Title 17](#), USC)
- Any attempt to circumvent the Charter School's security measures, content filters or access restricted resources is prohibited.
- All malicious and nefarious activities are prohibited. Examples include (1) unauthorized trespassing or infiltration of a network or device, (2) the intentional distribution of malware, (3) any attempt to deny a remote service. Malicious actors may also be in violation of *California's unauthorized computer access law, Penal Code 502(c) PC*.
- The intentional collection, mining, or uncovering of personal information, files, passwords belonging to a user other than yourself is prohibited.

- Impersonation of any user other than yourself is prohibited.
  - Unauthorized falsification or modification of any school records is prohibited.
  - The collection or transmission of personal information (e.g. home address, phone number, personal email) which may be useable to identify an individual without written consent is prohibited.
  - Political lobbying or advertising is prohibited
  - Unauthorized maintenance, service, repairs, or upgrades are prohibited. The Charter School's owned or operated resources must be maintained by the ITD or authorized third parties.
- 5. Expectation of Privacy:** For email, networks, systems, and other resources owned or operated by the Charter School, users should have no expectation of privacy. The Charter School reserves the right to manage and monitor all aspects of its own resources. The following are examples of actions which may be performed for reasons deemed legitimate by the Charter School:
- Obtain emails, messages, and their attachments transmitted to or through the Charter School's owned or operated email systems
  - Monitor an individual's use of the Charter School's owned resources
  - Locate or track the location of the Charter School's owned resource
  - Confiscate, search, disable, or wipe any of the Charter School's owned device, item or their contents/data

Personal devices are private. The Charter School must obtain permission to access personal devices.

- 6. Cyberbullying:** Cyberbullying is the use of technology resources to willfully harm either a person or persons through electronic systems (e.g. texts, photos, videos. messages, social media). Examples of this behavior include, but are not limited to:
- Transmitting false, cruel, hateful, or embarrassing information or media targeting others
  - Creating posts or websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures or jokes ridiculing others
  - Unauthorized access to any resource (e.g. social media, email) for purposes of downloading or transmitting vicious or embarrassing materials
  - Engaging someone in electronic communication, tricking that person into revealing sensitive personal information, and transmitting that information or media to others
  - Posting of a student picture without their permission.
  - The use of derogatory comments, including those regarding race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, political persuasion, body type, physical or mental health.

- **Stolen Technology:** The Charter School provides: Remote security to monitor and protect each device
- Reporting tools that give hardware and software information
- Web filtering to protect students on and off school networks
- Adherence to CIPA regulations around internet security policies

Additionally, we reserve the right to utilize digital features for the purposes of recovering property that is believed to be lost or stolen.

The Charter School will work with local law enforcement to recover any stolen device.

The Charter School's ITD always tries to take the most cautious and diplomatic approach when attempting to recover any stolen items. Three attempts will be made to contact the parent using all forms of communication. Once our attempts have been unsuccessful, a police report is established for further investigation. ITD will then continue their process by tracking the device, contact the person in question, communicate with local law enforcement and if found provide a warrant to search for the device.

If a student has a lost or stolen device while still enrolled with the School, please report the device to local law enforcement and contact the ITD to begin the investigation process. ITD will do their best to recover and replace any device that has been reported as lost, stolen, or missing. A police report must be provided prior to starting the investigation.

For more details, please contact: [helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com).

- 7. Student Departure:** Upon student departure (e.g. withdrawal, graduation, or expulsion) from the Charter School, all issued items must be returned within 30 days. Prepaid return labels may be provided at no cost. Please reach out to your homeschool teacher for complete details regarding returns.

If all attempts to collect a device are unsuccessful, the matter will be handed over to local law enforcement and pursued on behalf of the Charter School. Any missing technology will also be added to the student's records and you may be held financially responsible for the device cost.

For information regarding technology returns, please review the Charter School's *Tech Centre and Issued Technology Agreement* or contact ITD at [helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com).

## **8. Disclaimer & Acknowledgements:**

- The Charter School reserves the right to modify its policies and rules at any time.
- **ALL DEVICES, ITEMS AND SOFTWARE ISSUED BY THE CHARTER SCHOOL ARE SCHOOL PROPERTY. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO RETURN ALL ITEMS ISSUED TO YOU UPON REQUEST BY OR DEPARTURE FROM THE CHARTER SCHOOL.** We reserve the right to issue penalties (e.g. denial of access to resources, withholding of transcripts) or seek legal remedies in

response to non-compliance.

- Access to the Charter School's technology, resources and support is a privilege, not a right. These privileges are offered at the discretion of the Charter School.
- The Charter School will not be held liable for the information or data retrieved, stored, or transmitted by means of the Charter School owned or operated resources, devices, networks, or systems
- Users should not have an expectation of privacy in the use of the Charter School's resources, email, systems, networks
- Illegal activities performed using the Charter School's devices, networks, and systems will be reported to the proper authorities when discovered
- The Charter School will not be held responsible for losses or damages suffered by any user, including loss of data, interruption of service, delays, or non-deliveries
- The Charter School's issued property reported as lost, missing, or stolen may be remotely tracked, located and/or disabled at the discretion of the Charter School.
- The Charter School may confiscate and search any of the Charter School's resource for any reason deemed reasonable by the Charter School including in response to violation of school policies or government regulations
- The Charter School is not in any way an Internet Service Provider
- Parents/guardians are held financially responsible for all willfully damaged or lost properties. If properties are lost or willfully damaged, students and/or parents/guardians shall be responsible for restitution equal to the current replacement cost of the materials. If payment is not made, the Charter School may withhold the student's grades, diploma or transcripts, provided, certain due process is met.
- When ordering, all tech items are subject to availability and may be substituted for a similar product based on supply. The following limits have been placed for tech devices assigned to students:
  - 1 computer per student
  - 1 tablet per student
  - 1 printer per student

To provide access for all students, Blue Ridge Academy Tech Store offers a baseline option of technology items for students to select without using the student's planning amount. Previously issued devices need to be returned prior to issuing a like device. Technology devices are expected to be usable for 3 years or more, including laptops, Chromebooks, MacBooks, and tablets. Prior approval is required to order a similar device within 3 years. Please save the original box the device came in to use upon return. If you are ordering a new similar type of device, like a laptop for a laptop, you need to send the old device back to the tech department prior to receiving the new device. Please reach out to the [helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:helpdesk@theblueridgeacademy.com) for a shipping label to send the old device back.

- If the device is damaged or broken within 3 years, please contact ITD and they will review the device to

see if it can be repaired or a loaner provided.

- All Blue Ridge Academy student devices have a 3rd party content filter on them to block out malicious websites and harmful or inappropriate content. Student devices with the content filter cannot connect to public wifi connections with a captive portal (redirect page), examples include Starbucks, Panera, and Marriott. Alternatively, devices can connect to public wifi that does not have a captive portal when connecting.

**9. User Agreement Statement:** I have read, understand, and will abide by the PARENT- STUDENT INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY when using any of the Charter School's technology and other electronic resources issued, owned or operated by the Charter School. I further understand that any violation of the policies above is considered unethical, may subject my child to disciplinary actions and in some cases may constitute a criminal offense. Should I violate any of the policies outlined in this agreement, I understand my access to any of the Charter School's technology resources may be limited, revoked or returned and disciplinary and or legal action may be taken.

## Non-Compliance Policy

Blue Ridge Academy Homeschool Teachers partner with families to educate students enrolled in our programs. The partnership is effective if students and parent/guardians are actively participating in our program and meeting enrollment requirements.

Indications that a student is not actively participating in our program include:

- Non-attendance
- Missing or refusing to schedule meetings
- Unable to contact
- Not meeting enrollment requirements
- Not submitting requested work samples
- Making inadequate progress
- Not participating in internal benchmark testing

**In these instances, BR may:**

- Contact the family by phone and email requesting resolution within two school days.
- Two school days later, if there is not a satisfactory resolution, the Homeschool Teacher will attempt to contact the family again by phone, email, and a letter of non-compliance will be sent to the address on file. The letter will request a resolution within five school days.
- If the issue is resolved, the parent/guardian and teacher will confer to review expectations and create a plan to maintain compliance.
- If the issue is not resolved, the Homeschool Teacher will attempt to contact the family again by phone, email, and a second letter of non-compliance will be sent to the address on file. The letter will request a resolution within five school days. In addition, an Administrative Conference Call will be scheduled to be held no sooner than six days of the date the letter was sent.
- It may be deemed, at that time, that independent study is not the best educational placement for the student and the student may be withdrawn.

- Should a student be Administratively Withdrawn, the student is not eligible to re-enroll in the school for at minimum, one full academic school year.
- Enrichment and Curriculum orders will be put on hold until compliance issues are resolved.

Blue Ridge students are expected to comply with all Board approved policies. Please review the full [Non-Compliance Policy](#).

## Work Samples

To meet California Independent Study Guidelines, Work Samples will be required and collected at the end of each Learning Period. Students are required to submit work samples as requested by their Homeschool Teacher to demonstrate and document student learning. Failure to provide work samples may jeopardize your child's enrollment status at Blue Ridge Academy.

Acceptable Work Sample Criteria:

- Original or scanned PDF version
- Demonstrates neat and organized work
- Demonstrates a good reflection of your child's learning and abilities
- Includes student's first/last name, subject, and date in the top right hand corner
- The sample needs to be completed and dated within the collection Learning Period
- Must be non-sectarian (non-religious)
- Photographs must include a summary from the student's perspective
- Samples may be typed or handwritten by the student. Younger students may dictate to the parent to write or type for them

Non-Compliant Work Samples Include:

- Scanned documents that are difficult to read or are very light
- A scanned or printed document of a certificate of completion or report from an online learning platform
- Samples completed and dated not within the Learning Period
- Samples completed on non-school days such as weekends and holidays
- A photograph which does not include the student's summary of the project/concept
- Incomplete worksheets or work

## Testing & Assessment

Assessment data is critical to Blue Ridge Academy. Essentially, assessments are one indicator of student learning. Using assessment data is not only a healthy thing to do internally as a school community, but also a required part of the WASC accreditation process and the charter renewal process.

WASC accreditation shows that a school has met and is maintaining a high level of standards. Furthermore, having WASC accreditation validates the integrity of the school's program for transfer students and transcripts for university acceptance. Many of our families put great value on WASC accreditation. In order to receive WASC accreditation, a school must go through a rigorous process of describing, demonstrating, and evaluating its instructional program through a school-wide action plan.

It is a wonderful accomplishment for a school to be accredited, but the work is not finished. Maintaining accreditation is an ongoing cycle of managing change and improvement through regular assessment, planning, implementing, monitoring and reassessing. Blue Ridge Academy is involved in the WASC cycle.

Assessment data is also an important piece in our charter renewal process. All charter schools are authorized by a sponsoring school district. The authorizer is granting permission to the petitioning organization to make their own independent decisions and operate their own school. In return, the charter school needs to demonstrate compliance with the essential terms of the charter, which include Ed Code, student achievement, governance, reporting requirements, etc. Blue Ridge Academy must remain in good standing with the authorizer. Without authorization, we have no charter! Authorizers gauge compliance and achievement with assessment data. Scores at the individual student level are never shared, and privacy of student names is maintained according to federal laws that protect students.

Regular benchmark testing is important for understanding a student's learning process and needs and is required as being a part of Blue Ridge Academy. Failure to participate in benchmark testing during the assigned assessment window will trigger non-compliance. The school will begin the non-compliance process based on school policy, which may result in administrative withdrawal.

## State Standardized Tests – California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

As students of a public charter school, our students participate in the following state standardized tests:

- Grades 3 – 8: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)
- Grade 11: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC)
- Grades 5, 8, and one time in High School during the year of their last science course: California Standards Test for Science (CAST)
- Grades 5, 7 and 9: Physical Fitness Test (PFT)
- ELPAC: English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (English Learners only)

As a public charter school we receive state funds that each student accesses when they use their Instructional Planning Amount.

Participation rates are critical to the success of our school. A public school is required to achieve a participation rate of 95% on any state testing. If a school has less than 95% of its students participate in any assessment, the school runs the risk of receiving a serious penalty by the state of California.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a parent's or guardian's written request to Charter School officials to excuse their child from any or all parts of the CAASPP shall be granted.

Blue Ridge Academy faculty administers all state standardized tests at facilities located within driving distance of your home. A testing schedule will be provided to you from your teacher. Individual student performance results on statewide achievement testing will be made available to parents that would like a copy.

Often our families have questions or concerns about the SBAC/CAST assessments. At Blue Ridge Academy we want our families to feel informed about assessments so they are prepared and feel more comfortable partaking. We have created Parent Testing Videos and Resources for this purpose. We also ask that you work

closely with your teacher so your student can be assigned any designated supports that would help them during their testing session.

## Non-Participation in Testing

Students who do not participate in the CAASPP and CAST assessments during the applicable grades (CAST for grades 5, 8, and 11; CAASPP for grades 3-8 and 11) will be provided an alternative grade-level, proctored exam, currently CAASPP Interim Assessment. As described in the Parent Student Handbook, it is essential for the School's and the student's success that all students participate in school-wide testing and students who do not participate in either the CAASPP and CAST assessments or the alternative assessment (CAASPP Interim Assessment), will not be allowed to re-enroll the following school year.

### Star 360

Blue Ridge Academy believes that ongoing assessments will help to inform instructional practices. The Star 360 is not designed to find flaws but rather to build strength and skills necessary to become successful in the student's educational career.

BR chose Star 360 because of its adaptive and non-adaptive nature and the diagnostic tool pinpoints students' needs down to the sub-skill level. Star 360 provides data-driven insights and support for successful implementation of the new standards. BR will provide the parents with the results of Star 360, so the parent and teacher can work together to create a personalized learning plan for each student.

Assessments allow our teachers to monitor student growth and performance consistently and continuously over a student's entire K-12 career. The questions will automatically change the level of difficulty, thus "adaptive," based on student response patterns.

Star 360 Testing will occur up to three times a year, typically in the fall, winter, and spring of each year.

### Testing for English Language Learners

California state law requires that the ELPAC be given each year to English Learners. The ELPAC (English Language Proficiency Assessments for California) is a test that measures how well a student can listen, speak, read, and write in English. The purpose of ELPAC is to ensure all students receive adequate support to succeed.

New students that have declared another language besides English on their home language survey must be assessed. This includes TK students. Students that have been previously designated as English Learners at another public school (even if it was years ago) must be tested by law every year until they reach a level of proficiency and are reclassified. At that point they will no longer need to take the test.

## Records Department

The Records Department supports families by maintaining student records and will process requests for various documents such as work permits, enrollment verification, report cards, and transcripts.

Document Requested	Expected Time of Processing
Work Permit	2-3 Business Days
Enrollment Verification	2-3 Business Days

Copies of Grades & Official/Unofficial Transcripts	3-5 Business Days
Copies of CUME (Student Records)	3-5 Business Days

## Work Permits

There are two types of work permits: Entertainment and Non-Entertainment

- **Entertainment Work Permits** are obtained from the entertainment industry employer, filled out, and sent to [records@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:records@theblueridgeacademy.com),
- **Non-Entertainment Work Permits** are different. Before the Records Department can fill out a regular work permit, the employer needs to provide the student a **B1-1** permit (think of this as the permit to attain a permit). This is important because it tells our department where the student wishes to work. Once the **B1-1** permit is sent to [records@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:records@theblueridgeacademy.com), one of our Records specialists will fill it out and provide a **B1-4** at the same time. The **B1-4** is the actual permit.

It is within the discretion of the school to determine whether a minor, who is still subject to the state's compulsory education laws, may obtain a work permit and, therefore, be employed to work. Students must be in good academic standing and in compliance with all school policies to be eligible for a work permit.

\*Examples of good academic standing include but are not limited to:

- The student having C's or better in all subjects and is completing sufficient work based on our non-compliance process.
- The student is compliant with all school policies.
- The student is not missing work samples or attendance or in the non-compliance process.

\*Please note this list is not exhaustive and the school will review the student's specific situation prior to issuing a work permit.

## Concurrent, College Enrollment Exceptions

For all concurrent, college enrollment requests, please send applications and inquiries to your HST and Guidance Counselor. There is a minimum five (5) business day turnaround for these applications, so please plan accordingly.

Call (661) 412-9363 if you have any comments, questions, or concerns regarding the Records Department.

## Harassment

It is the policy of BR to prohibit harassment by any means, including but not limited to: sexual, physical, verbal, written, electronic, mental, emotional and visual harassment, intimidation, bullying, and cyberbullying. Whether direct or indirect, such intentional acts substantially harm and interfere with a student's education, threaten the overall educational environment, and disrupt the operation of school.

Harassment for any reason including, but not limited to: race, religious creed (including religious dress and grooming practices), color, national origin (including language use restrictions), immigration status, citizenship status, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, military and veteran status, or association

with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned characteristics or any other legally protected category is a violation of both state and federal law. Verified harassers may face loss of computer or other special privileges, suspension, or expulsion. Any disciplinary action will be determined by the school administrators and board of directors. In addition, when any kind of threat is communicated or when a hate crime is committed, the administration will report such crimes to local law enforcement officials. Harassers may also be subject to civil and criminal liability for any such unlawful behavior.

BR will take measures against harassment. This includes any act that takes place on or immediately adjacent to the location of any school event, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation, or off-campus activities that cause or threaten to cause a substantial and material disruption at school or interfere with the rights of students to be secure.

In situations in which electronic or cyber bullying originates from a non-school computer, but is brought to the attention of school officials, any disciplinary action shall be based upon whether the conduct is determined to be so severely disruptive of the educational process that it markedly interrupts or severely impedes the student learning.

It is important to understand that jokes, stories, cartoons, nicknames, the sending or posting of inappropriate and hurtful email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings, including blogs and comments that violate school, state, and federal law may be offensive to others and will not be tolerated.

If you feel you have been a victim of harassment or are being bullied, inform your Homeschool Teacher or school administrator immediately. Keeping quiet or ignoring the problem will not make it go away. The teacher or school administrator will document the events, contact the appropriate parties, and appropriate steps will be taken.

### **Grievance Policy and Procedure**

BR is committed to achieving student/family satisfaction. The following procedure was developed to ensure that student, family and Blue Ridge Academy staff grievances are addressed fairly by the appropriate persons in a timely manner. BR prohibits discrimination against students/families on the basis of ethnicity, sex, ancestry, physical or mental disability, race, color, gender, national origin, sexual orientation or religion.

The parent/guardian will address in writing any concern or grievance initially with the student's Homeschool Teacher and supervisor. Both Homeschool Teacher and supervisor will respond within ten (10) school days.

If the concern or grievance is not resolved, the parent/guardian may, within ten (10) school days, request a meeting with school leadership to discuss the concern or grievance. The Sr. Director will investigate and respond within ten (10) school days.

A written email and letter will be sent to the family that will address the concern and outcome.

## **Appendix A: Nondiscrimination Statement**

### **Nondiscrimination Statement**

The Charter School does not discriminate against any person on the basis of actual or perceived disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, immigration status, religion, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes in the California Penal Code.

The Charter School Board of Directors shall not refuse to approve the use or prohibit the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or other curriculum for classroom instruction or any book or other resource in a school library on the basis that it includes a study of the role and contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, LGBTQ+ Americans, persons with disabilities, or members of other ethnic, cultural, religious, or socioeconomic status groups. The Charter School Board of Directors shall not adopt or approve the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or curriculum for classroom instruction if the use of such would subject a student to unlawful discrimination pursuant to Education Code section 220.

The Charter School adheres to all provisions of federal law related to students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (“IDEIA”).

The Charter School does not discourage students from enrolling or seeking to enroll in the Charter School for any reason, including, but not limited to, academic performance, disability, neglect or delinquency, English proficiency, for being homeless or a foster/mobile youth, economic disadvantage, nationality, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. The Charter School shall not encourage a student currently attending Charter School to disenroll or transfer to another school based on any of the aforementioned reasons except in cases of expulsion and suspension or involuntary removal in accordance with the Charter School’s charter and relevant policies.

The Charter School does not request nor require student records prior to a student’s enrollment.

The Charter School shall provide a copy of the California Department of Education Complaint Notice and Form to any parent, guardian, or student over the age of 18 at the following times: (1) when a parent, guardian, or student over the age of 18 inquires about enrollment; (2) before conducting an enrollment lottery; and (3) before disenrollment of a student.

Pursuant to California law and the California Attorney General’s guidance to K-12 schools in responding to immigration issues (“Guidance”), Charter School provides equal access to free public education, regardless of a student’s or their parent’s or guardian’s immigration status or religious beliefs. The complete Guidance, including Appendix G – Know Your Rights can be reviewed via the following link: <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/bcj/school-guidance-model-k12.pdf>

The Charter School is committed to providing an educational atmosphere that is free of unlawful harassment under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex); Titles IV, VI, and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, or national origin); The Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the IDEIA; and Section 504 and Title II of the ADA (mental or physical disability). The Charter School also prohibits sexual harassment, including cyber sexual bullying, and harassment based upon pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, race, religion, religious affiliation, creed, color, immigration status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by federal, state, local law, ordinance or regulation. The Charter School does not condone or tolerate harassment of any type, including discrimination, intimidation, or bullying, including cyber sexual bullying, by any employee, independent contractor or other person with

which the Charter School does business, or any other individual, student, or volunteer. This applies to all employees, students, or volunteers and relationships, regardless of position or gender. The Charter School will promptly and thoroughly investigate any complaint of harassment and take appropriate corrective action, if warranted. Inquiries, complaints, or grievances regarding harassment as described in this section, above, should be directed to the Charter School Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) Compliance Officer:

Name: Samantha Haynes  
Address: 955 Stanislaus Street Maricopa, CA 93252-9779  
Phone: (805) 638-7321  
Email: samantha.haynes@theblueridgeacademy.com

The lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission or participation in the Charter School’s programs or activities. The Charter School prohibits retaliation against anyone who files a complaint or who participates or refuses to participate in a complaint investigation.

## Appendix B: Complete Policies

### Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Directory Information Policy and “Opt-Out” Notice

Blue Ridge Academy is committed to ensuring that the Charter School complies with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the disclosure of directory information.

The purpose of the Blue Ridge Academy Governing Board approving this Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Directory Information Policy and “Opt-Out” Notice is to accomplish the following:

1. Establish the Release of Directory Information
2. Define Directory Information
3. Identify the “Opt-Out” Notice Procedure

1. Release of Directory Information: “Directory information,” which is defined as set forth below, may be released to requestors in limited circumstances by the Charter School without additional notice to parents/guardians unless the parent/guardian “opts out” of such disclosures, in writing. State and federal law allow directory information to be disclosed to any requestors, except those who intend to use the information for commercial purposes. However, the Charter School’s policy is to not release directory information to any requestor, for any purpose, without specific prior parent/guardian consent in each situation, EXCEPT the Charter School will release such information to requestors that engage in political advocacy, lobbying, or information dissemination related to California charter schools.

2. Definition of Directory Information: Blue Ridge Academy has designated the following information as directory information:

- Parents’/guardians’ names
- Address
- Electronic mail address
- Dates of attendance
- Degrees, honors, and awards received; and
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended

3. “Opt-Out” Notice: If a parent/guardian does not want the Charter School to disclose the parent/guardian’s contact and other directory information from his/her child’s records to such persons or entities without the parent/guardian’s prior written consent, the parent/guardian must notify the Charter School in writing within two weeks of receipt of this policy.

### Foster Youth Policy

The Governing Board of Blue Ridge Academy (the “Charter School”) desires to ensure that foster children are provided equal access to the same free, appropriate public education provided to other children and youth. Foster students will be given access to the education and other services that such students need to ensure that they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held. Foster students will not be stigmatized or segregated in a separate school or program based on the student’s status as foster youth. The purpose of the Blue Ridge Academy Governing Board approving this Foster Youth Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Define Foster Child/Student/Youth and School of Origin
2. Establish a Foster Child Liaison
3. Outline Admission Requirements for Foster Children
4. Outline the Rights of a Former Foster Children
5. Outline Course Work and Graduation Requirements for Foster Children
6. Establish Transportation Requirements for a Foster Children
7. Outline Who Has Access to Records for Foster Children

1. Definitions:

- Foster child/student/youth means a child who has been removed from his or her home pursuant to Welfare and Institutions (“W&I”) Code section 309, is the subject of a petition filed under W&I sections 300 or 602, or has been removed from his or her home and is the subject of a petition filed under W&I Code sections 300 or 602.

- The Charter School is the school of origin when the student attended the Charter School when permanently housed or was last admitted at the initial detention or placement or subsequent change in placement of a foster child. If the school the foster child attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which the foster child was last admitted, or if there is some other school that the foster child attended with which the foster child is connected and that the foster child attended within the immediately preceding 15 months, the foster child liaison, in consultation with, and with the agreement of, the foster child and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster child, shall determine, in the best interests of the foster child, the school that shall be deemed the school of origin.

2. Foster Child Liaison: The School’s foster child liaisons are:

- Dr. Loretta Burns, [loretta.burns@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:loretta.burns@theblueridgeacademy.com)
- Bambi Ballesteros, [bambi.ballesteros@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:bambi.ballesteros@theblueridgeacademy.com)

The School’s foster child liaison is required to do all of the following:

- Ensure and facilitate the proper educational placement, enrollment in school and checkout from school of foster children.
- Assist foster children when transferring from one school to another school in ensuring proper transfer of credits, records and grades.
- Notify the foster child’s attorney and the appropriate representative of the county child welfare agency of pending expulsion proceedings if the decision to recommend expulsion is a discretionary act, pending proceedings to extend a suspension until an expulsion decision is rendered if the decision to recommend expulsion is a discretionary act, and, if the foster child is an individual with exceptional needs, pending manifestation determinations if the School has proposed a change in placement due to an act for which the decision to recommend expulsion is at the discretion of the Superintendent.
- The foster child liaison, in consultation with, and with the agreement of, the foster child and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster child, may recommend, in accordance with the foster child’s best interests, that the foster child’s right to attend the school of origin be waived and the foster child be enrolled in a public school that pupils living in the attendance area in which the foster child resides are eligible to attend.
- Before making a recommendation to move a foster child from his or her school of origin, the foster liaison shall provide the foster child and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster child with a written explanation stating the basis for the recommendation and how the recommendation serves the foster child’s best interest.
- If the foster child liaison, in consultation with the foster child and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the foster child, agrees that the best interests of the foster child would best be served by his or her transfer to a school other than the school of origin, the foster child shall immediately be enrolled in the new school.

3. Admission: All foster students are required to follow the school’s process for admitting students, including filling out and submitting the school’s admission packet on time. As with all students, admission depends upon availability. In the event of an oversubscription in a grade, foster students will participate in the lottery as with any other student. If the foster child seeking admission has outstanding fees, fines, textbooks or other items or moneys due to the school last attended or is unable to produce clothing or records normally required for admission, such as previous academic records, medical records, including, but not limited to, records or other proof of immunization history, proof of residency, other documentation or school uniforms, this will not serve as a basis for non-admission. Within two days of admission of the foster child, the foster child liaison will contact the school last attended by the foster child to obtain all academic and other records.

If a dispute arises regarding the request of a foster child to remain in Blue Ridge Academy as the school of origin, the

foster child has the right to remain in Blue Ridge Academy pending resolution of the dispute. The dispute shall be resolved in accordance with the Uniform Complaint Procedures adopted by the School.

Admission in Blue Ridge Academy as the school of origin will be allowed, unless a determination is made that it is not in the best interest of the foster child to attend Blue Ridge Academy. Best interest factors include, but are not limited to, appropriateness of the current educational setting and proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement.

4. Former Foster Children: If the jurisdiction of the court is terminated before the end of an academic year, the Blue Ridge Academy shall allow a former foster child who is in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8, inclusive, to continue his or her education as the school of origin through the duration of the academic school year.

If the jurisdiction of the court is terminated while a foster child is in high school, Blue Ridge Academy shall allow the former foster child to continue his or her education in Blue Ridge Academy as the school of origin through graduation.

5. Course Work and Graduation Requirements: The Charter School will accept coursework satisfactorily completed by the foster child while attending another public school, a juvenile court school, a charter school, a school in a country other than the United States, or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school even if the pupil did not complete the entire course and shall issue that pupil full or partial credit for coursework completed.

The credits accepted shall be applied to the same or equivalent course, if applicable, as the coursework completed in the prior school. The Charter School will not require the foster child to retake a course if the pupil has satisfactorily completed the entire course in a public school, a juvenile court school, a charter school, a school in a country other than the United States, or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school. If the pupil did not complete the entire course, the Charter School shall not require the pupil to retake the portion of the course the pupil completed unless the Charter School, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the pupil, finds that the pupil is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the foster youth shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that the pupil may continue and complete the entire course.

A foster youth shall not be prevented from retaking or taking a course to meet the eligibility requirements for admission to the California State University or the University of California.

A foster student who transfers between schools any time after the completion of the student's second year of high school and is in the student's third or fourth year of high school, the School shall exempt from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the School that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3, unless the School makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If the School determines that the foster student is reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements within the student's fifth year of high school, the School shall do all of the following: 1) Inform the student of the student's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements; 2) Inform the student, and the student's educational rights holder, about how remaining in the School for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution; 3) Provide information to the student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; 4) Permit the student to stay in school for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements upon agreement with the student, if the student is 18 years of age or older, or if under 18 years of age, with the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student.

To determine whether a foster student is in the third or fourth year of high school, either the number of credits the pupil has earned to the date of transfer or the length of the student's school admission may be used, whichever will qualify the student for the exemption.

Within 30 calendar days of the date that a foster student may qualify for the exemption from local graduation requirements transfers into a school, the School shall notify the student, the educational rights holder, and the School's liaison for foster children and youth of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for an exemption. If the School fails to provide timely notice, the student shall be eligible for the exemption from local graduation requirements once notified, even if that notification occurs after the student is no longer in foster care, if the student otherwise qualifies for the exemption.

A foster student that has been exempted from local graduation requirements in accordance with Education Code section 51225.1 and completes the statewide coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 before the end of the student's fourth year of high school and that student would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the school, the School shall not require or request that the pupil graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If a foster student is exempted from local graduation requirements pursuant to Education Code section 51225.1, the School shall notify the student and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student how any of the requirements that are waived will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution and shall provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

If a foster student who is eligible for the exemption from local graduation requirements and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the School shall not be required to accept the exemption or be denied admission in, or the ability to complete, courses for which the student is otherwise eligible, including courses necessary to attend an institution of high education, regardless of whether those courses are required for statewide graduation requirements. If a foster student is not exempted from local graduation requirements or has previously declined the exemption, the School shall exempt the student at any time if an exemption is required by the student and the student qualifies for the exemption.

If a foster student is exempted from local graduation requirements, the School shall not revoke the exemption.

If a foster student is exempted from local graduation requirements, the exemption shall continue to apply after the student is no longer a foster student while the student is admitted in the School or if a foster student who is exempt from local graduation requirements transfers to the School from another school.

The School shall not require or request a foster student to transfer schools in order to qualify the student for an exemption.

A complaint for noncompliance with this section may be filed with the School under the School's Uniform Complaint Procedures.

6. Transportation: If the foster student requires transportation to continue to attend the Charter School as the school of origin, the Charter School will ensure that the foster child receives transportation in a cost effective manner.

7. Records: A foster family agency with jurisdiction over a currently admitted or former pupil, a short-term residential treatment program staff responsible for the education or case management of a student, and a caregiver who has direct responsibility for the care of the student, including a certified or licensed foster parent, an approved relative or nonrelated extended family member, or a resource family (as defined below), may access the current or most recent records of grades, transcripts, attendance, discipline and online communication on platforms established by schools for pupils and parents, and any individualized education programs (IEPs) that may have been developed, or any plan adopted pursuant to Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 of a currently admitted or former foster pupil.

A foster family agency, short-term residential treatment program, or caregiver may review and receive pupil records

pursuant to subdivision (a) for purposes of monitoring the pupil's educational progress, updating and maintaining the pupil's education records as required by Section 16010 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, and ensuring the pupil has access to educational services, supports, and activities. These purposes include, but are not limited to, admitting the pupil in school, assisting the pupil with homework, class assignments, and college and scholarship applications, and admitting the pupil in extracurricular activities, tutoring, and other afterschool and summer enrichment programs. A "resource family" means an individual or family that has successfully met both the home environment assessment and the permanency assessment criteria necessary for providing care for a child placed by a public or private placement agency by court order, or voluntarily placed by a parent or guardian.

### **Homeless Education Policy**

Blue Ridge Academy is committed to ensuring that homeless students are provided equal access to the same free, appropriate public education provided to other children and youth. Homeless students will be given access to the education and other services that such students need to ensure that they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held. Homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated in a separate school or program based on the student's status as homeless.

The purpose of the Blue Ridge Academy Governing Board approving this Homeless Education Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Define Homeless Children and Youth
2. Identify the Homeless Liaison's Responsibilities
3. Explain the Requirements for Admission of Homeless Children and Youth
4. Identify Admission Disputes and the Dispute Resolution Process
5. Outline Transportation Options
6. Define Comparable Education Services for Homeless Children and Youth
7. Describe Coursework and Graduation Requirements

#### **1. Definitions:**

- ***Homeless children and youths*** means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youths:
  - Who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks (not including mobile home parks), or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
  - Who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
  - Who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
  - Who are migratory children who qualify as homeless for purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described above.

- **Unaccompanied youth** includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- **The Charter School is the school of origin** when the student attended the Charter School when permanently housed or was last admitted when the student became homeless. The Charter School will not be considered the school of origin when it is contrary to the wishes of a student's parent(s) or guardian(s), or is not in the best interest of the student.

In determining the best interest of the child or youth, the School shall:

- Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the best interest of the child or youth, less it is contrary to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth;
- Consider student-centered factors related to the child's or youth's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children and youth, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth;
- If, after conducting the best interest determination based on consideration of the presumption identified above and the student-centered factors identified above, the School determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the School, the School shall provide the child's or youth's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination, in a manner and form understandable to such parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, including information regarding the right to appeal; and
- In the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the School liaison assists in placement or admission decisions, gives priority to the views of such unaccompanied youth and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal.

A child or youth or unaccompanied youth shall be considered homeless for as long as he/she is in a living situation described above.

**2. Homeless Liaison Responsibilities:** The School's Homeless Liaison is Bambi Ballesteros, [Bambi.Ballesteros@theblueridgeacademy.com](mailto:Bambi.Ballesteros@theblueridgeacademy.com) The School's homeless liaison is required to do all of the following:

- Ensure that homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- Ensure that homeless children and youth are admitted in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the School;
- Ensure that homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youth are eligible, including referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services and other appropriate services;

- Ensure that the parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- Ensure that admission disputes are mediated in accordance with the dispute resolution process outlined below;
- Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians, including schools, shelters, public libraries and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths;
- Ensure that school personnel providing services participate in professional development and other technical support as determined appropriate by the State Coordinator;
- Ensure that unaccompanied youths 1) are admitted to school; 2) have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth, including implementation of procedures to identify and remove barriers that prevent youths from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school; and 3) are informed of their status as independent students and that the youths may obtain assistance from the liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

**3. Admission:** All homeless students are required to follow the school’s process for admitting students, including filling out and submitting the school’s enrollment packet on time. As with all students, admission depends upon availability. In the event of an oversubscription in a grade, homeless students will participate in the lottery as with any other student. As used in this policy, admission means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

If the homeless student seeking admission is unable to produce records normally required for admission, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency or other documentation, this will not serve as a basis for non-admission. Provided that the admission process has been followed in all other respects, a homeless student will be admitted in the School despite the missing paperwork. Upon admission, the School will contact the school last attended by the students to obtain relevant academic and other records.

If the student needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the School will immediately refer the parent or guardian of the student, or the unaccompanied youth, to the Homeless Liaison, who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.

A homeless student shall be allowed to continue his or her education in the school of origin through the duration of homelessness. If the homeless student’s status changes before the end of the academic year so that the student is no longer homeless, either of the following apply: 1) If the homeless student is in high school, the School (if it the school of origin) shall allow the formerly homeless student to continue that student’s education in the School through graduation; 2) If the homeless student is in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8, inclusive the School (if it is the school of origin) shall allow the formerly homeless student to continue that student’s education in the School through the duration of the academic school year.

- 4. Admission Disputes and the Dispute Resolution Process:** If a dispute arises over admission in the School of a homeless student, the student will be immediately enrolled to the School in which admission is sought, pending resolution of the dispute.

The School will refer the student and/or his/her parents or guardians to the Homeless Liaison, who will carry out the dispute resolution in accordance with the process set forth below, as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Liaison will ensure that the youth is immediately admitted in school pending resolution of the dispute.

Parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth may provide written or oral documentation to support their positions about admission and may seek assistance of social services, advocates, and/or service providers in the dispute process.

The School will provide the parent or guardian of the student with a written explanation of the School's decision regarding admission, including the rights of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth's appeal the decision. The written explanation will be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated and provided in a language that the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth can understand.

If the dispute remains unresolved at the School level or is appealed, then the School Homeless Liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the homeless liaison at the county office of education (COE). The COE's homeless liaison will review these materials and determine the school selection or admission decision within five (5) working days of receipt of the materials. The COE homeless liaison will notify the School and parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth of the decision.

If the dispute remains unresolved at the COE level or is appealed to the State, then the COE homeless liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the State Homeless Coordinator. Upon review, the CDE will notify the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth of the decision relating admission in the School within ten working days of receipt of the materials.

- 5. Transportation:** The School will provide or arrange for transportation of a homeless student, at the request of the parent, guardian or Homeless Liaison, to the School when the School is the school of origin. If the student begins living in an area served by another local educational agency while continuing his/her education at the School, the School will contact that local educational agency to agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the student with transportation to and from the School.
- 6. Comparable Education Services:** Each homeless student will be provided access to services comparable to services offered to other students in the School, including but not limited to the following:
- Educational services for which the homeless student meets federal, state and local program eligibility criteria
  - Programs in career and technical education
- 7. Coursework and Graduation Requirements:** The School shall accept coursework satisfactorily completed by a homeless student while attending another public school, a juvenile courts school, a School, a school in a country other than the United States, or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school even if the pupil did not complete the entire course and shall issue that homeless student full or partial credit for the coursework completed.

The credits accepted shall be applied to the same or equivalent course, if applicable, as the coursework completed in the prior school.

The School shall not require a homeless student to retake a course if the student has satisfactorily completed the entire course in a prior school. If the student did not complete the entire course, the School shall not require the pupil to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless the School, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the student, finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the homeless student shall be admitted in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so the student may continue and complete the entire course.

A homeless student shall not be prevented from retaking or taking a course to meet the eligibility requirements for admission to the California State University or the University of California.

A homeless student who transfers between schools any time after the completion of the pupil's second year of high school and is in the student's third or fourth year of high school, the School shall exempt from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the School that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3, unless the School makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If the School determines that the homeless student is reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements within the student's fifth year of high school, the School shall do all of the following: 1) Inform the student of the student's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements; 2) Inform the student, and the student's educational rights holder, about how remaining in the School for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution; 3) Provide information to the student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; 4) Permit the student to stay in school for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements upon agreement with the student, if the student is 18 years of age or older, or if under 18 years of age, with the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student.

To determine whether a homeless student is in the third or fourth year of high school, either the number of credits the pupil has earned to the date of transfer or the length of the student's school admission may be used, whichever will qualify the student for the exemption.

Within 30 calendar days of the date that a homeless student may qualify for the exemption from local graduation requirements transfers into a school, the School shall notify the student, the educational rights holder, and the School's liaison for homeless children and youth of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for an exemption. If the School fails to provide timely notice, the student shall be eligible for the exemption from local graduation requirements once notified, even if that notification occurs after the student is no longer homeless, if the student otherwise qualifies for the exemption.

A homeless student that has been exempted from local graduation requirements in accordance with Education Code section 51225.1 and completes the statewide coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 before the end of the student's fourth year of high school and that student would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the school, the School shall not require or request that the pupil graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If a homeless student is exempted from local graduation requirements pursuant to Education Code section

51225.1, the School shall notify the student and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student how any of the requirements that are waived will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution and shall provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

If a homeless student who is eligible for the exemption from local graduation requirements and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the School shall not be required to accept the exemption or be denied admission in, or the ability to complete, courses for which the student is otherwise eligible, including courses necessary to attend an institution of high education, regardless of whether those courses are required for statewide graduation requirements.

If a homeless student is not exempted from local graduation requirements or has previously declined the exemption, the School shall exempt the student at any time if an exemption is required by the student and the student qualifies for the exemption.

If a homeless student is exempted from local graduation requirements, the School shall not revoke the exemption.

If a homeless student is exempted from local graduation requirements, the exemption shall continue to apply after the pupil is no longer a homeless student while the student is admitted in the School or if a homeless student who is exempt from local graduation requirements transfers to the School from another school.

The School shall not require or request a homeless student to transfer schools in order to qualify the pupil for an exemption.

A complaint for noncompliance with this section may be filed with the School under the School's Uniform Complaint Procedures.

### **Standards of Conduct and Civility Policy**

Blue Ridge Academy is committed to upholding the highest standards of personal integrity and conduct. These standards are based on our dedication to treating people with dignity, respect, and civility, and taking individual and collective responsibility for our conduct. The manner in which we conduct ourselves defines us and how we are perceived by others. As school employees, we also serve as role models to our students. Blue Ridge Academy employees are accountable for integrity in conduct and for the consequences of their actions or inactions. The highest of ethical standards are expected in all matters internal, as well as with students, parents, and the community at large. All Blue Ridge Academy employees and any individuals acting on behalf of Blue Ridge Academy are required to conduct themselves in compliance with the essence of this Standards of Conduct and Civility Policy.

The purpose of the Blue Ridge Academy Governing Board adopting this Standards of Conduct and Civility Policy is to do the following:

1. Explain Conduct and Civility
2. Outline Communication Etiquette
3. Outline Unacceptable Behaviors Involving Students
4. Outline Prohibited Work Conduct
5. Outline Acceptable and Recommended Behaviors

## 6. Explain the Process for Reporting Unacceptable Behaviors and Consequences

- 1. Conduct and Civility:** Blue Ridge Academy expects all employees to uphold the highest standards of personal integrity and conduct. This includes, but is not limited to, treating others with respect, kindness and a positive and professional attitude. Blue Ridge Academy does not allow harassment in any form. See our Anti-Harassment Policy and Title IX Policy for Sexual Harassment for details.
- 2. Communication Etiquette:** Blue Ridge Academy employees communicate with other staff, families, students and the community in a variety of ways. The following outlines acceptable communication measures for communicating via email, phone or social media.

### **Email:**

- Remember that your email correspondence is a reflection upon you and our school
- Please be professional in content and tone in your email correspondence with staff, departments, students, and families by using a greeting (Dear xxx or Good Morning)
- Use appropriate language (refrain from using text shorthand in emails)
  - Refrain from over-punctuation
  - Use of 'Reply All'
    - DO NOT use 'reply all' to emails sent to All Staff such as 'Welcome' or 'Congratulations' emails. Instead, reply only to the person being welcomed or congratulated
    - DO use the 'reply all' feature in all other cases so no one is cut out of the loop
  - Be careful about forwarding information that includes long threads. Often times, the person receiving the forwarded information does not need to see all threaded responses
  - If you are not readily available to respond to your families by email for any reason, please remember to set an out of office message on your email that states you are out of the office, your estimated return, and who to contact if they need immediate assistance.
- Emails are documents that can be requested for legal review and shared with all parties.
- When emailing your families, use BCC so they do not have each other's email addresses, and so they don't "reply all" and flood each other with emails.

### **Phone:**

- It is very important that the number you are using for work is monitored/answered by you only.
- When answering the phone let the families know they've reached you
  - 'Hello, this is' ..... or 'Thank you for calling'.
  - Blue Ridge utilizes Ring Central as a dedicated line for work calls. Talk to your supervisor to set up this service.
- Record a professional voicemail
  - Sample message:
    - *Hello, you have reached \_\_\_\_\_, Blue Ridge Academy teacher. I am either supporting a student or away from my desk. Please leave a detailed message and I will return your call within 24 business hours. Thank you and have a great day!*

### **Social Media:**

- Please send all work-related posts and fliers to your director for approval prior to posting on social media or printing.
- It is very important that as a school we have consistent and clear messaging. We need to maintain professionalism at all times when responding to posts as a Blue Ridge employee.
- Maintaining a professional tone and response is expected.

- Please DO NOT under any circumstances provide information about our school that is false as that is a misrepresentation and can result in negative consequences.
- All information needs to be 100% accurate.
- If ever in doubt, please seek the answer directly from your director before posting a response.
- As Blue Ridge employees, we need to be advocates of accuracy and ensure accuracy 100% of the time.

**3. Unacceptable Behaviors Involving Students:** These lists, and any subsequent lists, are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather illustrative of the types of behavior addressed by this policy.

- Giving gifts to an individual student that are of a **personal and intimate nature** (including photographs); or items such as money, food, outings, electronics, etc. without the written pre-approval of a School Leader. Use best judgement and it is recommended that any such gifts be filtered through the Regional Coordinator along with the rationale.
- Kissing of ANY kind
- Massage [Note: Prohibited in athletics unless provided by massage therapist or other certified professional in an open public location. Coaches may not perform massage or rub-down. Permitted in special education only as instructed under an IEP or 504 plan.]
- Full frontal or rear hugs and lengthy embraces
- Sitting students on one's lap (grades 3 and above)
- Touching buttocks, thighs, chest or genital area
- Wrestling with students or other staff member except in the context of a formal wrestling program
- Tickling or piggyback rides
- Any form of sexual contact
- Any type of unnecessary physical contact with a student in a private situation
- Intentionally being alone with a student away from school
- Furnishing alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs or failing to report knowledge of such
- "Dating" or "going out with" a student
- Remarks about physical attributes or physiological development of anyone. This includes comments such as "Looking fine!" or "Check out that [body part]."
- Taking photographs or videos of students for personal use or posting online
- Undressing in front of a student
- Leaving campus alone with a student for lunch
- Sharing a bed, mat, or sleeping bag with a student
- Making, or participating in, sexually inappropriate comments
- Sexual jokes, or jokes/comments with sexual overtones or double-entendres
- Seeking emotional involvement (which can include intimate attachment) with a student beyond the normative care and concern required of an educator.
- Listening to or telling stories that are sexually oriented
- Discussing your personal troubles or intimate issues with a student
- Becoming involved with a student so that a reasonable person may suspect inappropriate behavior
- Giving students a ride to/from school or school activities without the express, advance written permission of Regional Coordinator and the student's parent or legal guardian
- Being alone in a room with a student at school with the door closed and/or windows blocked from view
- Allowing students at your home and/or in rooms within your home without signed parental permission for a pre-planned and pre-communicated educational activity which must include another educator, parent, or designated school volunteer
- Staff mirroring the immature behavior of minors

- Sending emails, text messages, social media responses, making phone calls, or sending notes or letters to students if the content is not about school activities.
- Communication via private social media accounts is not acceptable.

**4. Prohibited Work Conduct:** The following is a list of conduct that is prohibited and will not be tolerated by the School. It is not an all-inclusive list, but rather a list designed to give examples of the types of conduct prohibited by the School.

- Falsification of employment records, employment information, or other School records
- Recording the work time of another employee or allowing any other employee to record your work time, or allowing falsification of any time card, either your own or another's
- Theft, deliberate or careless damage, or loss of any School property or the property of any employee or customer
- Provoking a fight or fighting during working hours or on School property
- Participating in horseplay or practical jokes on School time or on School premises where such conduct might be a safety risk or might be interpreted as offensive
- Carrying firearms or any other dangerous weapons on School premises at any time or while acting on behalf of the School
- Violation of the Substance and Alcohol policy
- Rudeness and/or unprofessionalism in your interactions with staff, students and families
- Insubordination, including but not limited to, failure or refusal to obey the orders or instructions of a supervisor or member of administration, or the use of abusive or threatening or abusive language toward a supervisor or member of administration
- Unreported absence on scheduled workdays unless otherwise excused,
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism unless otherwise excused,
- Unauthorized use of School equipment, time, materials, facilities, or the School name
- Sleeping or malingering on the job
- Failure to observe working schedules, including the required rest and meal periods
- Soliciting other employees for membership, funds, or other similar activity in connection with any outside organization during your working time or the working time of the employee(s) solicited
- Distributing unauthorized literature or any written or printed material during working time or in work areas ("Working time" does not include your meal and break periods.)
- Failure to timely notify your supervisor when you are unable to report to work absent extenuating circumstances
- Failure of an employee to obtain permission to leave work for any reason during normal working hours
- Abuse of sick leave
- Violation of the Standards of Conduct and Civility Policy
- Failure to provide a physician's certificate when requested or required to do so
- Violating the School's Personal Standards or dress code
- Breaching confidentiality
- Making derogatory racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual remarks or gestures; any violation of the Harassment and/or Equal Employment Opportunity policy; or using profane or abusive language at any time on School premises or during working hours
- Violation of any safety, health, security, or School rule
- Negligence or other conduct leading to the endangerment or harm of a child or children
- Working overtime without authorization or refusing to work assigned overtime
- Unsatisfactory job performance

- Willfully or maliciously making false statements regarding any co-worker or submitting a complaint known to be false.

**5. Acceptable and Recommended Behaviors:** These lists, and any subsequent lists, are not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather illustrative of the types of behavior addressed by this policy.

- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- “High-fives” and hand slapping
- When age appropriate, touching face to check temperature, wipe away a tear, remove hair from face, or other similar types of contact
- Placing TK through second grade students on one’s lap for purposes of comforting the child for a short duration only
- Holding hands while walking with small children or children with significant disabilities
- Assisting with toileting of small or disabled children in view of another staff member
- Touch required under an IEP or 504 Plan
- Reasonable restraint of a violent person to protect self, others, or property
- Obtaining formal written pre-approval from the Superintendent to take students off school property for activities such as field trips or competitions, including parent’s written permission and waiver form for any sponsored after-school activity whether on or off campus
- Emails, text-messages, phone conversations, and other communications to and with students, if permitted, must be professional and pertain to school activities or classes (communication should be initiated via transparent [non-private] school-based technology and equipment)
- Keeping the door wide open when alone with a student
- Keeping reasonable and appropriate space between you and the student
- Stopping and correcting students if they cross your own personal boundaries, including touching legs, or buttocks, frontal hugs, kissing, or caressing
- Keeping administration informed when a significant issue develops about a student, such as a change in demeanor or uncharacteristic behavior
- Keeping after-class discussions with a student professional and brief
- Immediately asking for advice from senior staff or administration if you find yourself in a difficult situation related to boundaries
- Involving your supervisor in discussion about boundaries situations that have the potential to become more severe (including but not limited to: grooming or other red flag behaviors observed in colleagues, written material that is disturbing, or a student’s fixation on an adult)
- Making detailed notes about an incident that in your best judgement could evolve into a more serious situation later
- Recognizing the responsibility to stop Unacceptable Behaviors of students and/or co-workers
- Asking another staff member to be present, or within close supervisory distance, when you must be alone with a student after regular school hours
- Prioritizing professional behavior during all moments of student contact
- Asking yourself if any of your actions, which are contrary to these provisions, are worth sacrificing your job and career.

This policy does not prevent: 1) touching a student for the purpose of guiding them along a physical path; 2) helping them up after a fall; or 3) engaging in a rescue or the application of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) or other emergency first-aid. Nor does it prohibit the use of reasonable force and touching in self-defense or in the defense of another. Restraining a child

who is trying to engage in violent or inappropriate behavior is also allowed. Only such force as necessary to defend one's self, another person, or the child or to protect property is legally permitted. Excessive force is prohibited.

- 6. Reporting Unacceptable Behaviors and Consequences:** Any concerns must be promptly reported to a supervisor or the Superintendent. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Suicide Prevention Policy**

Blue Ridge Academy is committed to protecting the health and well-being of all Blue Ridge Academy students, including vulnerable youth populations, by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide and self-harming behavior. Vulnerable youth populations include LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning) youth, youth living with mental and/or substance use disorders, youth who engage in self-harm or have attempted suicide, youth in out-of-home settings, youth experiencing homelessness, American Indian/Alaska Native youth or youth that identify with other racial minority groups, youth bereaved by suicide and youth living with medical conditions and disabilities.

California *Education Code (EC)* Section 215, as added by Assembly Bill 2246, (Chapter 642, Statutes of 2016) mandates that the Governing Board of any local educational agency (LEA) that serves pupils in grades seven to twelve, inclusive, adopt a policy on pupil suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. The policy shall specifically address the needs of high-risk groups, including suicide awareness and prevention training for teachers, and ensure that a school employee acts within the authorization and scope of the employee's credential or license.

The purpose of Blue Ridge Academy Governing Board approving this Suicide Prevention Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Explain the Purpose for The Suicide Prevention Policy
2. Identify Parental Involvement in Suicide Prevention
3. Outline Key Terms and Definitions of Suicide Prevention
4. Identify Risk Factors and Protective Factors
5. Outline the Warning Signs of Suicide
6. Outline How to Respond to the Warning Signs of Suicide
7. Explain Suicide Discussion/Communication for Parents and Children.
8. Outline the Process for Assessment and Referral
9. Outline the Process for Implementing the Policy
10. Provide Resources for Parents, Students, and Staff Members on Suicide Prevention

**1. Purpose:** Blue Ridge Academy recognizes that:

- a) physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcome,
- b) further recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people,
- c) the has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide, and

d) acknowledges the school's role in providing an environment which is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and one which helps to foster positive youth development.

In recognition of the need to protect the health, safety and welfare of its students, to promote healthy development, to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school aged youth, and to address barriers to learning, Blue Ridge Academy hereby adopts a policy, which corresponds with and supports other federal, state and local efforts to provide youth with prevention education, early identification and intervention, and access to all local resources to promote health and prevent personal harm or injury.

With the intention of creating a safe and nurturing educational entity that minimizes suicidal ideation in students, we also recognize our duty to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our students, and aim to safeguard students and staff against suicide attempts, deaths and other trauma associated with suicide. These safeguards include ensuring adequate supports for students, staff, and families affected by suicide attempts and loss. Because the emotional wellness of students greatly impacts learning, motivation, and educational success, the current policy shall be paired with other policies that support the emotional and behavioral wellness of students. Our policy is based on research and best practices in suicide prevention, and has been adopted with the understanding that suicide prevention activities decrease suicide risk, increase help-seeking behavior, identify those at risk of suicide, and decrease suicidal behaviors. Empirical evidence refutes a common belief that talking about suicide can increase risk or "place the idea in someone's mind."

In an attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the school has developed strategies for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, and the identification of the mental health challenges frequently associated with suicidal thinking and behavior. These strategies shall include professional development for parents/guardians, caregivers, students, and school personnel who regularly interact with students or serve in a position to recognize the risk factors and warning signs of suicide.

- 2. Parental/Guardian Involvement:** Parents and guardians play a key role in youth emotional and behavioral health, including suicide prevention. This policy is meant to be used as a tool for parents/guardians to be informed and actively involved in decisions regarding a child's welfare. Parents/guardians who learn the warning signs and risk factors for suicide are better equipped to connect with professional help when necessary. The school encourages and advises parents/guardians to take every statement regarding suicide or personal harm seriously and avoid assuming that a child is simply seeking attention.

Parents and guardians can also contribute to factors and conditions that reduce vulnerability to suicidal and self-harming behavior, for vulnerable youth populations. Feeling accepted by parents or guardians is a critical protective factor for vulnerable youth populations. As educators, Blue Ridge Academy faculty and staff can help protect vulnerable youth populations by ensuring that parents and guardians have adequate resources regarding family acceptance and the essential role it plays in students' behavioral and emotional health.

- 3. Student Participation and Education:** Blue Ridge Academy along with its partners has carefully reviewed available student curricula to ensure it promotes the mental health model of suicide prevention and does not encourage the use of the stress model to explain suicide.

Under the supervision of school-employed mental health professionals, and following consultation with county and community mental health agencies, students shall:

- Receive developmentally appropriate, student-centered education about the warning signs of mental health challenges and emotional distress;
- Receive developmentally appropriate guidance regarding the School's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures.
- The content of the education shall include:
  - Coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma;
  - How to recognize behaviors (warning signs) and life issues (risk factors) associated with suicide and mental health issues in oneself and others;
  - Emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.

Student-focused suicide prevention education can be incorporated into classroom curricula (e.g., health classes, freshman orientation classes, science, and physical education).

Blue Ridge Academy will support the creation and implementation of programs and/or activities on campus that raise awareness about mental wellness and suicide prevent (e.g., Mental Health Awareness Weeks, Peer Counseling Programs, Freshman Success Programs).

#### 4. Key Terms and Definitions:

- ***At Risk*** A student who is defined as high risk for suicide is one who has made a suicide attempt, has the intent to die by suicide, or has displayed a significant change in behavior suggesting the onset or deterioration of a mental health condition. The student may have thought about suicide including potential means of death and may have a plan. In addition, the student may exhibit feelings of isolation, hopelessness, helplessness, and the inability to tolerate any more pain. This situation would necessitate a referral, as documented in the following procedures.
- ***Crisis Team*** A multidisciplinary team of primarily administrative, mental health, safety professionals, and support staff whose primary focus is to address crisis preparedness, intervention/response, and recovery. These professionals have been specifically trained in crisis preparedness through recovery and take the leadership role in developing crisis plans, ensuring school staff can effectively execute various crisis protocols, and may provide mental health services for effective crisis interventions and recovery supports.
- ***Mental Health*** A state of mental and emotional being that can impact choices and actions that affect wellness. Mental health problems include mental and substance use disorders.
- ***Postvention*** Suicide postvention is a crisis intervention strategy designed to reduce the risk of suicide and suicide contagion, provide the support needed to help survivors cope with a suicide death, address the social stigma associated with suicide, and disseminate factual information after the suicide death of a member of the school community.
- ***Risk Assessment*** An evaluation of a student<sup>[SEP]</sup> who may be at risk for suicide, conducted by the appropriate school staff (e.g., school psychologist or school counselor). This assessment is designed to elicit information regarding the student's intent to die by suicide, previous history of suicide attempts, presence of a suicide plan and its level of lethality and availability, presence of support systems, and level of hopelessness and helplessness, mental status, and other relevant risk factors.

- **Risk Factors for Suicide** Characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take his or her life. Suicide risk tends to be highest when someone has several risk factors at the same time. Risk factors may encompass biological, psychological, and or social factors in the individual, family, and environment.
- **Self-Harm** Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself. Can be categorized as either non-suicidal or suicidal. Although self-harm often lacks suicidal intent, youth who engage in self-harm are more likely to attempt suicide.
- **Suicide** Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior. Note: The coroner's or medical examiner's office must first confirm that the death was a suicide before any school official may state this as the cause of death.
- **Suicide Attempt** A self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person had at least some intent to kill himself or herself. A suicide attempt may result in death, injuries, or no injuries. A mixture of ambivalent feelings such as wish to die and desire to live is a common experience with most suicide attempts. Therefore, ambivalence is not a sign of a less serious or less dangerous suicide attempt.
- **Suicidal Behavior** Suicide attempts, intentional injury to self-associated with at least some level of intent, developing a plan or strategy for suicide, gathering the means for a suicide plan, or any other overt action or thought indicating intent to end one's life.
- **Suicide Contagion** The process by which suicidal behavior or a suicide influences an increase in the suicidal behaviors of others. Guilt, identification, and modeling are each thought to play a role in contagion. Although rare, suicide contagion can result in a cluster of suicides.
- **Suicidal Ideation** Thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior which may result in death. A desire to be dead without a plan or intent to end one's life is still considered suicidal ideation and should be taken seriously.

## 5. Risk Factors and Protective Factors:

**Risk Factors** are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take her or his life or participate in self-harming behaviors. These risks tend to be highest when someone has several risk factors at the same time.

**The most frequently cited risk factors for suicide are:**

1. Major depression (feeling down in a way that impacts your daily life) or bipolar disorder (severe mood swings)
2. Problems with alcohol or drugs
3. Unusual thoughts and behavior or confusion about reality
4. Personality traits that create a pattern of intense, unstable relationships or trouble with the law
5. Impulsivity and aggression, especially along with a mental disorder
6. Previous suicide attempt or family history of a suicide attempt or mental disorder
7. Serious medical condition and /or pain

It is important to bear in mind that the large majority of people with mental disorders or other suicide risk factors do not engage in suicidal behavior.

**Protective Factors** are characteristics or conditions that may help to decrease a person’s risk of suicide or self-harming behaviors. While these factors do not eliminate the possibility of suicide, especially in someone with risk factors, they may help to reduce that risk. Protective factors for suicide have not been studied as thoroughly as risk factors, so less is known about them.

**The most frequently cited protective factors of suicide include:**

1. Receiving effective mental health care
2. Positive connections to family, peers, community, and social institutions such as marriage and religion that foster resilience
3. The skills and ability to solve problems

**It is important for school districts to be aware of student populations that are at elevated risk of suicidal or self-harming behavior based on various factors:**

1. Youth living with mental and/or substance use disorders. While the large majority of people with mental disorders do not engage in suicidal behavior, people with mental disorders account for more than 90 percent of deaths by suicide. Mental disorders, in particular depression or bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder, alcohol or substance abuse, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, borderline personality disorder, conduct disorders, and anxiety disorders are important risk factors for suicidal behavior among your people. The majority of people suffering from these mental disorders are not engaged in treatment, therefore school staff may play a pivotal role in recognizing and referring the student to treatment that may reduce risk.
2. Youth who engage in self-harm or have attempted suicide. Suicide risk among those who engage in self-harm is significantly higher than the general population. Whether or not they report suicidal intent, people who engage in self-harm are at elevated risk for dying by suicide within 10 years. Additionally, a previous suicide attempt is a known predictor of suicide death. Many adolescents who have attempted suicide do not receive necessary follow up care.
3. Youth in out-of-home settings. Youth involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems have a high prevalence of many risk factors of suicide. Young people involved in the juvenile justice system die by suicide at a rate about four times greater than the rate among youth in the general population. Though comprehensive suicide data on youth in foster care does not exist, one research found that youth in foster care were more than twice as likely to have considered suicide and almost four times more likely to have attempted suicide than their peers not in foster care.
4. Youth experiencing homelessness. For youth experiencing homelessness, rates of suicide attempts are higher than those of the adolescent population in general. These young people also have higher rates of mood disorders, conduct disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder.
5. American Indian/Alaska Native youth. In 2009, the rate of suicide among American Indian / Alaska Native youth ages 15-19 was more than twice that of the general youth population. Risk factors that can affect this group include substance use, discrimination, lack of access to mental health care, and historical trauma.
6. LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning) youth. The CDC finds that LGBTQ youth are four times more likely, and questioning youth are three times more likely, to attempt suicide as their straight peers. The American Association of Suicidology reports that nearly half of young transgender people have seriously considered taking their lives and one quarter report having made suicide attempt. Suicidal behavior among LGBTQ youth can be related to experiences of discrimination, family rejections, harassment, bullying, violence and victimization. For those youth with baseline risk for suicide (especially those with a mental disorder), these experiences can place them at increased risk. It is these societal factors, in concert with other individual factors such as

mental health history, and not the fact of being LGBTQ that will elevate the risk of suicidal behavior for LGBTQ youth.

7. Youth bereaved by suicide. Studies show that those who have experience suicide loss, through the death of a friend or loved one, are at increased risk for suicide themselves.
8. Youth living with medical conditions and disabilities. A number of physical conditions are associated with an elevated risk for suicidal behavior. Some of the conditions include chronic pain, loss of mobility, disfigurement, cognitive styles that make problem-solving a challenge, and other chronic limitations. Adolescents with asthma are more likely to report suicidal ideation and behavior than those without asthma. Additionally, studies show that suicide rates are significantly higher among people with certain types of disabilities, such as those with multiple sclerosis or spinal cord injuries.

**6. Warning Signs of Suicide:** It is vital to suicide prevention that individuals are equipped to recognize the warning signs of someone who is seriously contemplating suicide. Behaviors that may mean a person is at *immediate* risk for suicide and thus prompt you to take action right away include:

- Talking about wanting to die or to kill one's self
- Looking for a way to kill one's self, such as a new or sudden interest in buying a gun
- Talking about feeling hopeless or like there's no point in living or carrying on
- Unusual or unexpected visits or calls to family and friends to say "goodbye" as if they will not be seen again
- Sudden efforts to get one's affairs in order, e.g., making a will out of the blue or giving away prized possessions
- A sudden sense of calm and happiness; though this might sound contradictory, if an extremely depressed person suddenly seems calm or happy, this can mean the person has made a decision to commit suicide. *Do not assume a person expressing a desire to die is joking.* Ask if they are serious. And make sure to follow up. Someone might say they are only joking when in fact the "joke" is motivated by a sincere desire to die. Suicide is not a joking matter; do not treat it as such. Less immediate, but still concerning, warning signs of suicidal ideation include:

- Feeling anxious or agitated
- Sudden reckless behavior
- Significant changes in sleep behavior (hardly sleeping, sleeping too much)
- Withdrawing or isolating from others
- Talking about feeling trapped
- Talking about pain feeling unbearable

- Talking about being a burden to others
- Increased use/abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Extreme mood swings

*The above behaviors do not necessarily indicate suicidal ideation in and of themselves. However, when combined with other factors (like a recent, painful loss or public moment of humiliation), they should take on a new sense of urgency to intervene with help.*

**7. Responding to the Warning Signs:** The most important thing you can do is ***take the person seriously***. Do not judge them; do not make them feel bad; do not make a joke about it even if it makes you feel uncomfortable. Above all, do not assume the person is only seeking attention. That is not your judgment to make and you making it could be a life-threatening mistake. Be there, support them, and take immediate action. That immediate action should include, at the very minimum, the following:

- Talk to the person. Let them know you care about them.
- Listen without judging. This means you need to set aside whatever religious or theological beliefs you have about suicide in the abstract. This moment is about helping the human being in front of you who needs support.
- Try not to act/appear shocked. The person is already in distress; an overwhelming display of emotions on your part could only further distress them and make them feel they should not talk to you.
- Ask the person directly, “Are you thinking of ending your life?” or “Are you considering killing yourself?” Though it might make *you* uncomfortable, remember these four concrete questions: Suicidal? Method? Have what you need to follow through with plan? When?

The more information you know, the better you can help the suicidal person as well as the professionals that need to get involved. Also, asking these questions can help you determine how significant the risk. The more developed the person’s suicidal plan, the higher the risk. For example, if the person has a method and a time in mind, the risk is extremely high.

- If the person says, “No,” continue to be with the person and give support and stay in touch for the next few days, repeating the above process.
- If the person says, “Yes,” and has a plan and access to lethal means, do not leave the person alone. Get a professional involved. ***Immediately contact a local mental health professional, law enforcement, a local hospital emergency department, and/or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1–800–273-8255).***
- Provide any relevant information you may have about the person to those who are managing the crisis.
- Keep in contact with the person after the crisis and provide ongoing care and support.
- Draw on other leaders and volunteers in your home and school community to provide support
- If a person ever asks you to keep their suicidal feelings or thoughts secret, refuse. The most loving response to someone feeling suicidal is getting them the help they need. *A life is at risk. If the risk of*

*chronic/not immediate:* <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>Sometimes people may display warning signs of suicide or *feel* suicidal but not have any plans to actually commit suicide. Their risk may be low, but their suicidal feelings or thoughts are still causing significant distress in their lives. Even though their risk of actually attempting suicide is low, you should still reach out and do your best to support them. Here are some ways you can do so:

- Ask them directly about their feelings and thoughts. You’d be surprised how willing some people are to talk about their suicidal urges. It might even be a relief for them to have someone to talk to about those urges. The Help Guide gives the following suggestions for starting such a conversation:
  - Help Guide, “Suicide Prevention: How to Help Someone who is Suicidal,” <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/suicide-prevention/suicide-prevention-helping-someone-who-is-suicidal>
    - *Ways to start a conversation about suicide:* I have been feeling concerned about you lately. Recently, I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing. I wanted to check in with you because you haven’t seemed yourself lately.
    - *Questions you can ask:* When did you begin feeling like this? Did something happen that made you start feeling this way? How can I best support you right now? Have you thought about getting help?
    - *What you can say that helps:* You are not alone in this. I’m here for you. You may not believe it now, but the way you’re feeling will change. I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help. When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold off for just one more day, hour, minute—whatever you can manage.

Educate yourself about suicide. Study more about suicide, its causes, and how to show love to someone who struggles with it.

Do not talk about suicidal people as if they are “crazy” or “insane.” Use words that will not make them feel like isolating themselves even more. Most suicidal people are not clinically psychotic. They might be grief-stricken or depressed, but do not make them feel like they should be locked up in an asylum.

Help the person find professional assistance. Offer to help them find a counselor or therapist; offer to help fill out forms for applying to your county or state’s mental health care system.

Encourage positive lifestyle changes, such as exercising more. Start small: for example, invite the person to going for a walk or hiking with you on the weekend.

Help the person make a safety plan. Help the person develop a set of concrete and specific-steps they promise to follow if they feel particularly suicidal. The plan should include things they promise to avoid (alcohol, drugs, etc.) and things they promise to do instead (call you, call another friend or therapist, etc.).

If necessary, have the person temporarily give you anything that they could use to commit suicide, such as unneeded, extra medications, razors, knives, etc.

Continue to stay in touch and support the person over the long-term. Repeat the above steps as needed.

**8. For Parents- Suicide Discussion/Communication: Talking to your Children:** *Here are some suggestions to help you with introducing the subject:*

- **Be courageous:** There is no shame in admitting that suicide is a scary issue. As parents, you probably want to protect your kids from all sorts of scary things. But you also have an obligation to teach them how to face reality and equip them to deal with all the scary things reality can bring. Here's the truth: your kids are going to learn about suicide one way or another. So would you rather that they learn about it from the media or a friend who suddenly kills himself, or would you rather that you have the opportunity to educate them in advance? So face those fears and dive right in.
- **Pick a time where you can have an uninterrupted conversation:** Start the conversation when you have the best chance of having your child's attention. A car ride, for example, ensures that your child will have fewer distractions than at home with the TV on. While you want to make sure your child gives you their attention, also make sure they don't feel trapped. Remember: if talking about suicide makes *you* uncomfortable, it can also make your child feel uncomfortable. So make sure you not only have their attention, but that you do so in an environment that feels non-threatening and open.
- **Plan in advance:** Think about what you want to say and make sure you have the right information to talk to your child accurately and helpfully about suicide. Make notes or plan a script if you want.
- **Tailor the conversation to your child's age:** When talking about suicide (or any big, serious topic, for that matter), make sure that you keep the conversation at a level that is appropriate for that child's developmental level. For younger children, your descriptions can be shorter and simpler. For older children, give longer and more detailed answers. Additionally, older children will likely have many questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, don't be afraid to say that. You can make it into a learning experience and research the answer with your child together. That's much better than inaccurate or misleading information.
- **Explain suicide in a way that dispels common myths:** Let your children know not only the facts about suicide, but also what depression is and how it can make people feel suicide is their only escape. Let them know that suicide is never a necessity and that there is always hope. Let them know that they are not bad if they feel sad or upset and that it's ok to tell you if they do feel this way. Make sure they feel safe in your home and that they do not have to pretend to always be happy. Let them know you will not judge them if they are feeling down and that you love them no matter how happy or sad they are.
- **Encourage them to talk to trusted adults:** Let your kids know that they can talk to you if they are feeling depressed or suicidal. Or let them know that if they ever feel uncomfortable talking to you about depression or suicide, that they can always talk to another trusted family member or adult in your community. The important thing is that they do not hold their feelings inside until they become so unbearable they feel like they are going to explode.
- **Let your child speak:** Ask your child what *they* think about the topic. Just be direct, e.g., "Have you thought about suicide? What do you think about it? Do your friends think about it? Do you know who you can talk to if you're feeling these feelings?"
- **Listen to your child:** If you ask your child what they think, make sure to be silent and give them the space to talk. If they say something that is inaccurate or that worries you, definitely be honest but do

not interrupt them. Wait until they are done, affirm that you heard what they said and appreciate that they shared their thoughts with you, and *then* address whatever issues you feel need to be corrected.

- **Seeking Assistance:** There are differing situations where your child’s distress may become apparent. Your child may reveal their suicidal thoughts to you, a friend, or a trusted adult. Whoever becomes aware of your child’s distress must immediately seek assistance. In seeking assistance, your child’s safety is the first consideration. The child should **never** be left alone during this crisis. If your child has a physician or therapist, call to alert them of the situation.

**For the Child/ Student:** School can be an exciting time, filled with new experiences, but at times you might feel as though it is more of a struggle. This information is meant to help you as you work through a tough time.

Life can be stressful. Between the friend drama, packed schedules, classes, clubs, relationships, sports, jobs, parental expectations, figuring out who you are, uncertainty over things, and not getting enough sleep, life can occasionally get you down and feel overwhelming. That is normal.

What is not normal is struggling through each day, feeling like things will only get worse. Maybe you feel like you have lost control, that nothing matters, or that you are alone. These feelings may indicate a condition that requires professional help, such as depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions.

Not everyone experiences mental health conditions in the same way, but **everyone struggling with their mental health deserves help**. Depression is among the most common conditions experienced. It is a complex medical illness that significantly interferes with an individual’s ability to function, enjoy life, and feel like themselves.

A number of factors may contribute to a person becoming depressed; genetic predisposition and stressful life events can certainly play a role, but sometimes depression can occur without an obvious cause. This means that **anyone can become depressed**, even those who seemingly have every reason to be happy.

Depression commonly affects your thoughts, your emotions, your behaviors, and your overall physical health. Experiencing any one of these symptoms on its own does not constitute depression; a diagnosis of depression requires several of these symptoms to occur for at least two weeks. Here are some of the most common symptoms that point to the presence of depression:

- **Feelings:**
  - Sadness
  - Hopelessness
  - Guilt
  - Moodiness
  - Angry outbursts
  - Loss of interest in friends, family, and favorite activities

- **Thoughts:**
  - Trouble concentrating
  - Difficulty making decisions
  - Trouble remembering
  - Thoughts of harming oneself
  - Delusions and/or hallucinations can also occur in cases of severe depression
- **Behaviors:**
  - Withdrawing from people
  - Substance abuse
  - Missing work, school, or other commitments
  - Attempts to harm oneself (e.g., cutting)
- **Physical/Somatic Problems:**
  - Tiredness or lack of energy
  - Unexplained aches and pains
  - Changes in appetite
  - Weight loss or gain
  - Changes in sleep – sleeping too little or too much

If you are experiencing symptoms of depression, it is important to **talk to a trusted adult** (parent, teacher, counselor, coach, or clergy) or doctor so that you can get the help you need. **Depression does not go away on its own, but with the appropriate help it can be treated.** Studies show that more than 80% of people with depression can feel better with talk therapy (counseling) and/or medication. Maybe you have noticed that your friend has not been acting like themselves lately and you are worried about whether or not they are really “fine” after all. If you think a friend may be depressed, show them you care by reaching out. Give yourself time to talk in a private, comfortable place. Honestly share what you have noticed (changes in behavior, things they have said or done) and ask them how they are feeling. Let them know that you are asking them because you care, because you want them to feel better, and because there is help. Let them know that there is hope and help available, and support them to get the help they need. If you don’t feel comfortable asking your friend, share your concerns with a trusted adult who can. Talking about mental health can be difficult, but reaching out and getting help for depression is one of the most courageous, important things you can do for yourself or for a friend. **It might even save a life.**

- Resources at home or outside school:
  - Talk to a parent or older relative

- Call your pediatrician or physician
- Talk to a trusted adult, teacher, or guidance counselor
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255
- If someone is in immediate danger, **call 911**. *Getting help does not mean that you have failed, it demonstrates courage, hope, and means you've allowed others to show they care.*

**9. Assessment and Referral:** When a student is identified by a staff person as potentially suicidal, e.g., verbalizes about suicide, presents overt risk factors such as agitation or intoxication, the act of self-harm occurs, or a student self-refers, the student will be seen by a school employed mental health professional within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral. If there is no mental health professional available, a school nurse or administrator will fill this role until a mental health professional can be brought in.

- School staff will continuously supervise the student to ensure their safety.
- The designated mental health and suicide prevention coordinator (s) will be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonably possible.
- The mental health professional/coordinator will contact the student's parent or guardian, and will assist the family with urgent referral. When appropriate, this may include calling emergency services or bringing the student to the local hospital emergency department, but in most cases will involve setting up an outpatient mental health or primary care appointment and communicating the reason for referral to the healthcare provider.
- Staff will ask the student's parent or guardian for written permission to discuss the student's health with outside care, if appropriate.

**Protecting the health and well-being of all students is of utmost importance. A suicide prevention policy serves to assist and protect all students through the following steps:**

- Students should be made aware of and informed about recognizing and responding to warning signs of suicide in peers and friends, using coping skills, using support systems, and seeking help for themselves and friends.
- Blue Ridge Academy will designate a suicide prevention coordinator to serve as a point of contact for students in crisis and to refer students to appropriate resources.
- When a student is identified as being at risk, they will be assessed by a school employed mental health professional who will work with the parents, staff, and student, and help connect them to appropriate local resources.
- Students will have access to national resources which they can contact for additional support.
- All students will be expected to help create a school culture of respect and support in which students feel comfortable seeking help for themselves or friends. Students are encouraged to tell an adult (e.g., teacher, parent) if they, or someone they know, is feeling suicidal or in need of help.

- Students should also know that because of the life or death nature of these matters, confidentiality or privacy concerns are secondary to seeking help for students in crisis.
- If the student is in imminent danger (has access to a gun, is on a rooftop, or in other unsafe conditions), a call shall be made to 911.
- A referral process should be prominently disseminated to all staff members with access to students, so they know how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about the school and community-based resources.
- The Superintendent shall establish crisis intervention procedures to ensure student safety and appropriate communications if a suicide occurs or an attempt is made by a student or adult on campus or at a school-sponsored activity.
- The referral process shall be prominently disseminated to all parents/guardians/caregivers so they know how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about the school and community-based resources.

**Coping Skills/Healthy Behaviors:** These are positive actions and behaviors that a student engages in to help them through their struggles on a daily basis. Some coping strategies include activities that students can do in order to regulate his/her emotions; ask the student for input, and teach him/her additional strategies if necessary. Strategies may include: *slow breathing, yoga, play basketball, draw, write in journal, take a break from school activities to drink water, listen to music.*

**Places I Feel Safe:** These are places that the student feels most comfortable. It should be a safe, healthy, and generally supportive environment. This can be a physical location, an imaginary happy place, or in the presence of safe people. Help students identify a physical and/or emotional state of being. Places may include: *my being with my friends, youth group at church, imagining I am on a beach watching the waves.*

**School Support:** Any school staff member or administrator can check in with a student regularly (regardless of whether or not the student seeks out help). Notify student's teacher(s) and request monitoring and supervision of the student (keeping in mind not to share confidential information).

**Adult Support:** It is important that a student also feel connected with healthy adults at home or in their community. The student should trust these adults and feel comfortable asking for help during a crisis. Identify how student will communicate with these individuals and include a phone number. Some adults may include: *family (e.g., grandparent, aunt, uncle, adult sister); clergy (e.g. youth pastor); or neighbor.*

**10. Prevention: School Policy Implementation:** A suicide prevention coordinator shall be designated by Blue Ridge Academy Administration. This may be an existing staff person, such as a School Counselor or School Psychologist. The suicide prevention coordinator will be responsible for planning and coordinating implementation of suicide prevention for the school.

The school suicide prevention coordinator will act as a point of contact in the school for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation. All staff members shall report students they believe to be at elevated risk for suicide to the school mental health/suicide prevention coordinator.

Providing a safe, positive, and welcoming school climate; and ensuring that students have trusting relationships with adults serves as the foundation for effective suicide prevention efforts. Bullying and

suicide-related behaviors have a number of shared risk factors including mental health challenges (e.g., depression, hopelessness, and substance use/abuse). Youth who report frequently bullying others and those who report being frequently bullied are at increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behavior. Bully-victims (those who report both bullying others and being bullied) are at the highest risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Keep in mind the relationship between bullying and suicide is more complex and less direct than it might appear. While bullying may be a precipitating event, there are often many other contributing factors, including underlying mental illness.

Prevention efforts should also address non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI or "cutting"). While the behavior is typically not associated with suicidal thinking, it is a red flag that someone is distressed and does increase the risk for suicidal thinking and behaviors. It is important that school staff learn to recognize the signs of NSSI, including cuts, burns, scratches, scabs, and scrapes, especially those that are recurrent and if explanations for the injuries are not credible. Suicide risk assessment should always be a part of intervention with the student who displays NSSI.

**Staff Professional Development:** All staff will receive annual professional development on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. The professional development will include additional information regarding groups of students at elevated risk for suicide, including those living with mental and/or substance use disorders, those who engage in self-harm or have attempted suicide, those in out-of-home settings, those experiencing homelessness, American Indian/Alaska Native student, LGBTQ students, students bereaved by suicide and those with medical conditions or certain types of disabilities. Additional professional development in risk assessment and crisis intervention will be provided to school employed mental health professionals and school nurses.

**Identification and Intervention:** Early identification and intervention are critical to preventing suicidal behavior. When a parent/caregiver or school staff become aware of a student exhibiting potential suicidal behavior, they should immediately and contact a member of the school's crisis response team for a suicide risk assessment and support. If the appropriate staff is not available, 911 should be called. Typically, it is best to inform the student what you are going to do every step of the way. Under no circumstances should the student be left alone (even in a bathroom/ restroom). Reassure and supervise the student until a 24/7 caregiving resource (e.g., mental health professional or law enforcement representative) can assume responsibility.

**Designated members of the school crisis team should conduct a suicide risk assessment.** The purpose of the assessment is to determine the level of risk and to identify the most appropriate actions to ensure the immediate and long-term safety and well-being of the student. This should be done by a team that includes a school-employed mental health professional.

**Caregiver notification is a vital part of suicide prevention.** The appropriate caregiver(s) must always be contacted when signs of suicidal thinking and behavior are observed. Typically, this is the student's parent(s); however, when child abuse is suspected protective services should be contacted. Even if a child is judged to be at low risk for suicidal behavior, schools may ask caregivers to sign a form to indicate that relevant information has been provided. Regardless, all caregiver notifications must be documented. Caregivers also provide critical information in determining level of risk. Whether a student is in imminent danger or not, it is strongly recommended that lethal means are (e.g., guns, poisons, medications, and sharp objects) are removed or made inaccessible.

**Refer to community services if warranted.** Referral options to 24-hour community-based services should be identified in advance. It is best to obtain a release from the primary caregiver to facilitate the sharing of information between the school and community agency.

**Help the parent/caregiver and/or school staff to develop with the student a safety plan.** Helping the student to develop a written list of coping strategies and sources of support that can be of assistance when he or she is having thoughts of suicide (e.g., a safety plan) is recommended. Suicide prevention hotlines (e.g., 800-273-TALK) and the app MY3 (my3app.org) can be helpful elements of such a plan.

**Schools are legally responsible for documenting every step in the assessment and intervention process.** A documentation form for support personnel and crisis response team members should be developed to record all suicide intervention actions and caregiver communication. Student information must be kept confidential but there are exceptions to FERPA when safety is of concern. Staff responsible for the safety and welfare of the student should be provided with the information necessary to work with the student and preserve the safety. School staff members do not need clinical information about the student or a detailed history of his or her suicidal risk or behavior. Discussion among staff should be restricted to the student's treatment and support needs.

**Keep tabs on the rumor mill (including social media).** If you hear or see something credible, refer the student to a school-employed mental health professional or crisis response team member. At the same time, gossip about particular incidents and students should also be discouraged.

**Please Remember:**

***If it seems that an individual is in immediate danger of hurting himself or herself:*** Take the person to a hospital Emergency Room to be evaluated by a health professional.

***If the person refuses help: Call 9-1-1 for police evaluation of the individual.*** If the person is a danger to self or others, the officer can transport the person to a hospital where he or she may be held.

**Postvention.** Following a suicide, school communities must strike a delicate balance. Students should have an opportunity to grieve, but in a way that does not glorify, romanticize or sensationalize suicide, which may increase suicide risk for other students.

**Confirm facts.** Confirm the facts related to the death with the family and/or police. Inform other schools in the district with students related or close to the deceased. Contact the family to offer condolences, ask what the school can do to help, offer resources, and to discuss communication with the school community. Protect and gather the personal effects of the deceased for the family and/or the police. Pay close attention to other students (and staff) who may also be at risk of suicidal behavior.

**Resources needed.** In some situations, schools may have adequate resources to handle the aftermath of a suicide. However, it is critical that schools assess the impact of the suicide on the school community to determine the level of postvention support needed. Factors to consider include how well known the student was, if the suicide was public (e.g., occurred at a school event), and/or if the deceased had shared his/her suicidal intentions with others (particularly to large numbers of other students via social media). These factors generally increase the impact and thus the potential postvention needs of members of the school community.

**Contagion.** Suicide contagion occurs when suicidal behavior is imitated. The effect is strongest among adolescents: they appear to be more susceptible to imitative suicide than adults, largely because they may identify more readily with the behavior and qualities of their peers. Guilt, identification, and modeling are each thought to play a role in contagion. Sometimes suicide contagion can result in a cluster of suicides. Studies indicate that 1-5% of all suicides within this age group are due to contagion (100-200 teenage cluster suicides per year).

Suicide postvention strategies designed to minimize contagion include avoiding sensationalism or giving unnecessary attention to the suicide, avoiding glorifying or vilifying of suicide victims, and minimizing the amount of detail about the suicide shared with students.

If there appears to be contagion, school administrators should consider taking additional steps beyond the basic crisis response, including stepping up efforts to identify other students who may be at heightened risk of suicide, collaborating with community partners in a coordinated suicide prevention effort, and possibly bringing in outside experts.

**Memorials.** Memorials in particular run the risk of glamorizing suicide and should thus be implemented with great care. Living memorials are recommended such as making donations to a local crisis center, participating in an event that raises awareness about suicide prevention, or providing opportunities for service activities in the school that emphasize the importance of student's taking care of each other.

**Care for the caregiver.** It is important that administrators and crisis team members not underestimate the potential impact that a suicide can have on school staff members. School leaders should promote a culture in which both the students and the adults in the building feel comfortable asking for help and/or to take a break. Providing contact information and encouraging staff to meet their own mental health needs is an important first step in ensuring that staff are adequately supported.

**Grief.** Understanding the nature of grief can help us better cope with loss. Grief is a natural, healthy process that enables us to recover from terrible emotional wounds. Grief can affect our thinking, behavior, emotions, relationships, and health. People may experience sleeplessness, exhaustion, indigestion, lack of appetite, or memory lapses. Recognizing that these are common reactions to grief can help us minimize them by reaching out to friends, or joining a community support group.

The journey through grief has four phases:

- **Shock** – In the days and weeks immediately following a devastating loss, common feelings include numbness and unreality, like being trapped in a bad dream.
- **Reality** – As the fact of the loss takes hold, deep sorrow sets in, accompanied by weeping and other forms of emotional release. Loneliness and depression may also occur.
- **Reaction** – Anger, brought on by feelings of abandonment and helplessness, may be directed toward family, friends, doctors, and the one who died or deserted us. Other typical feelings include listlessness, apathy, and guilt over perceived failures or unresolved personal issues.
- **Recovery** – Finally, there is a gradual, almost imperceptible return to normalcy. This is a time of adjustment to the new circumstances in life.

These phases vary in duration for each person, so the school should not impose a timetable upon anyone. Some people need a year or two, while others may take less time. Holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays can trigger intense grief, especially the first year. Everyone grieves differently – depending on personality, religious beliefs, maturity, emotional stability, and cultural traditions.

The following steps should be implemented after a **mental health crisis** has happened:

- Treat every threat with seriousness and approach with a calm manner, make the student a priority;
- Listen actively and non-judgmental to the student. Let the student express his or her feelings;
- Acknowledge the feelings and do not argue with the student;
- Offer hope and let the student know they are safe and that help is provided. Do not promise confidentiality or cause stress;
- Keep close contact with the parents/guardians/caregivers and mental health professionals working with the student.

The following steps shall be implemented upon **re-entry to school after a suicide attempt**:

- Obtain a written release of information signed by parents/guardians/caregivers and providers;
- Confer with student and parents/guardians/caregivers about any specific requests on how to handle the situation;
- Inform the student's teachers about possible days of absences;
- Allow accommodations for student to make up work (be understanding that missed assignments may add stress to student);
- Mental health professionals or trusted staff members should maintain ongoing contact to monitor student's actions and mood;
- Work with parents/guardians/caregivers to involve the student in an aftercare plan.

## **11. Resources for Parents, Students and Staff Members on Suicide Prevention:**

- **Parents as Partners: A Suicide Prevention Guide for Parents** is a booklet that contains useful information for parents/guardians/caregivers who are concerned that their children may be at risk for suicide. It is available from Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE). See the SAVE Web page at <https://www.save.org/product/parents-as-partners/>
- **Sources of Strength:** <https://sourcesofstrength.org>
- **Know the Signs:** <http://www.suicideispreventable.org>
- **National Mental Health and Suicide Support Services:** The following are just a few places you can access listings for local mental health services in your area. Please call or visit their websites for details.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** 1 (800) 273-TALK (800-273-8255)
- **Mental Health America (MHA):** [www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net) 1-800-969-6642
- **Mental Health Services Locator:** [www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases)

- **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** [www.afsp.org](http://www.afsp.org)
- **American Association for Suicide Prevention** [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org)
- **Center for Disease Control & Prevention** [www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/suicide](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/suicide)
- **Healthy Place** - [www.healthyplace.com](http://www.healthyplace.com)
- **Jed Foundation** - [www.jedfoundation.org](http://www.jedfoundation.org)
- **National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health** [www.ffcmh.org](http://www.ffcmh.org)
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org) 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
- **The Trevor Lifeline** - [www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org) 1-866-488-7386
- **National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)** - [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- **Strength of US-** [www.strengthofus.org](http://www.strengthofus.org)
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** [www.samhsa.gov/prevention/suicide.aspx](http://www.samhsa.gov/prevention/suicide.aspx)
- **Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)** [www.save.org](http://www.save.org)
- **Suicide Prevention Action Network USA** - [www.spanusa.org](http://www.spanusa.org)
- **Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC)** - [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

### **Book Resources for Parents: Mental Health and Resilience**

- Beardslee, William. *Out of the Darkened Room: When a Parent is Depressed: Protecting the Children and Strengthening the Family.* 2002.
- Rapee, Ronald et al. *Helping your anxious child: A step by step guide.* 2000.
- Manassis, Katharina & Levac, Anne Marie. *Helping your teenager beat depression: A problem-solving approach for families.* 2004.
- Lezine, DeQuincy and Brent, David. *Eight Stories Up: An Adolescent Chooses Hope over Suicide.* 2008.
- Bourne, Edward. *The Anxiety & Phobia Workbook.* 2005.
- Riera, Michael. *Uncommon Sense for Parents with Teenagers.* 2004.
- Phelan, Thomas. *Surviving Your Adolescents: How to Manage and Let Go of Your 13-18 year olds.* 1998.
- Sachs, Brad. *The Good Enough Child: How to Have an Imperfect Family and Be Totally Satisfied.* 2001.
- Apter, Terri. *The Confident Child: Raising Children to Believe in Themselves.* 1997.

- Book Resources for Teens: Mental Health and Resilience
- Hipp, Earl. *Fighting Invisible Tigers: A Stress Management Guide for Teens*. 2008.
- Fox, Annie. *Too Stressed to Think? A Teen Guide to Staying Sane When Life Makes You Crazy*. 2005
- Seaward, Brian. *Hot Stones and Funny Bones: Teens Helping Teens Cope with Stress and Anger*. 2002.
- Espeland, Pamela. *Life Lists for Teens: Tips, Steps, Hints, and How-To's for Growing Up, Getting Along, Learning, and Having Fun*. 2003.
- Covey, Sean. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. 1998.
- Kay Redfield Jamison, *Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide*
- Andrew Slaby and Lili Frank Garfinkle, *No One Saw My Pain: Why Teens Kill Themselves*
- Beverly Cobain and Jean Larch, *Dying to Be Free: A Healing Guide for Families after a Suicide*
- Linda H. Kilburn, *Reaching Out After Suicide: What's Helpful and What's Not*
- Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*
- Laura Van Dernoot Lipsky and Connie Burk, *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*
- Pema Chodron, *The Places that Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times*
- Pete Walker, *The Tao of fully feeling: Harvesting forgiveness out of blame.*
- Peter A. Levine, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*

### **Suspension and Expulsion Policy**

Blue Ridge Academy is committed to promoting learning and protecting the safety and well-being of all students at the Charter School. In creating this policy, the Charter School has reviewed Education Code Section 48900 *et seq.* which describes the non-charter schools' list of offenses and procedures to establish its list of offenses and procedures for suspensions and expulsions. The language that follows closely mirrors the language of Education Code Section 48900 *et seq.* The Charter School is committed to annual review of policies and procedures surrounding suspensions and expulsions and, as necessary, modification of the lists of offenses for which students are subject to suspension or expulsion.

The purpose of Blue Ridge Academy Governing Board approving this Suspension and Expulsion Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Establish the Responsibility of the Charter School
2. Identify the Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students
3. Identify Enumerated Offenses
4. Outline Suspension Procedures

5. Outline the Authority to Expel
6. Outline Expulsion Procedures
7. Outline Special Procedures for Expulsion Hearings Involving Sexual Assault or Battery Offenses
8. Identify the Record of Hearing
9. Identify the Presentation of Evidence
10. Outline the Written Notice to Expel
11. Outline the Maintenance of Disciplinary Records
12. Outline Expelled Students/Alternative Education
13. Outline Rehabilitation Plans
14. Outline the Readmission Process

**1. Responsibility of the Charter School:** When the policy is violated, it may be necessary to suspend or expel a student from the Charter School. This policy shall serve as the Charter School's policy and procedures for student suspension and expulsion, and it may be amended from time to time without the need to amend the charter so long as the amendments comply with legal requirements. Charter School staff shall enforce disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently among all students. This Policy and its Procedures will be printed and distributed as part of the Parent-Student Handbook and will clearly describe discipline expectations. Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student. For purposes of the Policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee's use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff, or other persons or to prevent damage to school property.

A student has the right to be free from the use of seclusion and behavioral restraints of any form imposed as a means of coercion, discipline, convenience, or retaliation by staff. This right includes, but is not limited to, the right to be free from the use of a drug administered to the student in order to control the student's behavior or to restrict the student's freedom of movement, if that drug is not a standard treatment for the student's medical or psychiatric condition. School staff may use seclusion or a behavior restraint only to control behavior that poses a clear and present danger of serious physical harm to the pupil or others that cannot be immediately prevented by a response that is less restrictive. School staff shall avoid, whenever possible, the use of seclusion or behavioral restraint techniques.

School staff shall not do any of the following:

- Use seclusion or a behavioral restraint for the purpose of coercion, discipline, convenience, or retaliation.
- Use locked seclusion, unless it is in a facility otherwise licensed or permitted by state law to use a locked room.
- Use a physical restraint technique that obstructs a pupil's respiratory airway or impairs the pupil's breathing or respiratory capacity, including techniques in which a staff member places pressure on a pupil's back or places his or her body weight against the pupil's torso or back.
- Use a behavioral restraint technique that restricts breathing, including, but not limited to, using a pillow, blanket, carpet, mat, or other item to cover a pupil's face.
- Place a pupil in a facedown position with the pupil's hands held or restrained behind the pupil's back.
- Use a behavioral restraint for longer than is necessary to contain the behavior that poses a clear and present danger of serious physical harm to the pupil or others.

The Charter School administration shall ensure that students and their parents/guardians are notified in writing upon enrollment of all discipline policies and procedures.

Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities unless otherwise agreed during the period of suspension or expulsion.

A student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom the Charter School has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 ("IDEIA") or who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") is subject to the same grounds for suspension and expulsion and is accorded the same due process procedures applicable to general education students except when federal and state law mandates additional or different procedures. The Charter School will follow all applicable federal and state laws including but not limited to the California Education Code, when imposing any form of discipline on a student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom the Charter School has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability or who is otherwise qualified for such services or protections in according due process to such students. Additional detail follows below.

**2. Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students:** A student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at any time including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while going to or coming from school; c) during the lunch period, whether on or off the school campus;

d) during, going to, or coming from a school-sponsored activity.

### **3. Enumerated Offenses:**

Discretionary Suspension Offenses. Students may be suspended for any of the following acts when it is determined the student:

- o Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
- o Willfully used force of violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.
- o Unlawfully possessed, used, sold or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
- o Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
- o Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- o Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property.
- o Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property (as used in this policy, “school property” includes, but is not limited to, electronic files and databases).
- o Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited, to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel. This section does not prohibit the use of his or her own prescription products by a student.
- o Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- o Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
- o Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, other school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties.
- o Commencing July 1, 2020, a pupil enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8, inclusive, shall not be suspended for any of the acts specified above relating to disrupting school activities and willful defiance, and those acts shall not constitute grounds for a pupil enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, to be recommended for expulsion.
- o Knowingly received stolen school property or private property.
- o Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
- o Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 288, 289, or former 288a, or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.
- o Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
- o Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
- o Engaged in, or attempted to engage in hazing. For the purposes of this subdivision, “hazing” means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a student organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective student. For purposes of this section, “hazing” does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
- o Made terrorist threats against school officials and/or school property. For purposes of this section, “terroristic threat” shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for his or her

own safety or for his or her immediate family's safety, or for the protection of school property, or the personal property of the person threatened or his or her immediate family.

o Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this section, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual's academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This section shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.

o Caused, attempted to cause, threaten to cause or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This section shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.

o Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading student rights by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This section shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.

o Discriminated against, harassed, intimidated, and/or bullied any person or groups of persons based on the following actual or perceived characteristics: disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or association with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics. This policy applies to all acts related to school activity or school attendance occurring within the school.

o Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.

1) "Bullying" means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

i. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of the student's age, or for a person of that student's age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student's or those students' person or property.

ii. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on that student's physical or mental health.

iii. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with that student's academic performance.

iv. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with that student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the Charter School.

2) "Electronic Act" means the transmission by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

i. A message, text, sound, or image.

ii. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:

(a) Posting to or creating a burn page. A "burn page" means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (1) above.

(b) Creating a credible impersonation of another actual student for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. "Credible impersonation" means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a student for the purpose of bullying the student and such that another student would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the student was or is the student who was impersonated.

(c) Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above.

"False profile" means a profile of a fictitious student or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual student other than the student who created the false profile.

iii. Notwithstanding subparagraphs (1) and (2) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

iv. An act of cyber sexual bullying. (48900(r)(2)(A)(iii).

(a) For purposes of this section, “cyber sexual bullying” means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described above. A photograph or other visual recording shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording or other electronic act.

(b) Cyber sexual bullying does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.

o A student who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a student who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (1).

o Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director or designee’s concurrence.

Non-Discretionary Suspension Offenses: Students must be suspended and recommended for expulsion for any of the following acts when it is determined the student:

o Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other dangerous object unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the students had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director or designee’s concurrence.

Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students may be recommended for expulsion for any of the following acts when it is determined the student:

o Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.

o Willfully used force of violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.

o Unlawfully possessed, used, sold or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.

o Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.

o Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.

o Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property.

o Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property.

o Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel. This section does not prohibit the use of his or her own prescription products by a student.

o Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.

o Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.

o Knowingly received stolen school property or private property.

o Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.

o Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 288, 289, or former 288a, or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.

o Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.

o Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.

- o Engaged in, or attempted to engage in hazing. For the purposes of this subdivision, “hazing” means a method of initiation or pre-initiation into a student organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective student. For purposes of this section, “hazing” does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
- o Made terrorist threats against school officials and/or school property. For purposes of this section, “terroristic threat” shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for his or her own safety or for his or her immediate family’s safety, or for the protection of school property, or the personal property of the person threatened or his or her immediate family.
- o Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this section, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual’s academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This section shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- o Caused, attempted to cause, threaten to cause or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This section shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- o Intentionally harassed, threatened or intimidated a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting class work, creating substantial disorder and invading student rights by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This section shall apply to students in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- o Discriminated against, harassed, intimidated, and/or bullied any person or groups of persons based on the following actual or perceived characteristics: disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or association with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics. This policy applies to all acts related to school activity or school attendance occurring within the school.
- o Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.

1) “Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including acts one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- i. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of that student’s age, or for a person of that student’s age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student’s or those students’ person or property.
- ii. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on that student’s physical or mental health.
- iii. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with that student’s academic performance.
- iv. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with that student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the Charter School.

2) “Electronic Act” means the transmission by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- i. A message, text, sound, or image.

ii. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:

(c) Posting to or creating a burn page. A “burn page” means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (1) above.

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(a) For purposes of this section, “cyber sexual bullying” means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described above. A photograph or other visual recording shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording or other electronic act.

(b) Cyber sexual bullying does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.

o A student who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a student who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (1).

o Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director or designee’s concurrence.

Non-Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students must be recommended for expulsion for any of the following acts when it is determined pursuant to the procedures below that the student:

o Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other dangerous object unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the students had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director or designee’s concurrence.

If it is determined by the Board of Directors that a student has brought a fire arm or destructive device, as defined in Section 921 of Title 18 of the United States Code, on to campus or to have possessed a firearm or dangerous device on campus, the student shall be expelled for one year, pursuant to the Federal Gun Free Schools Act of 1994.

The term “firearm” means (A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device. Such term does not include an antique firearm.

The term “destructive device” means (A) any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, including but not limited to: (i) bomb, (ii) grenade, (iii) rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, (iv) missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, (v) mine, or (vi) device similar to any of the devices described in the preceding clauses.

**4. Suspension Procedure:** Suspensions shall be initiated according to the following procedures:

□ Conference: Suspension shall be preceded, if possible, by a conference conducted by the Director or the Director’s designee with the student and his or her parent and, whenever practical, the teacher, supervisor or Charter School employee who referred the student to the Director or designee.



The conference may be omitted if the Director or designee determines that an emergency situation exists. An “emergency situation” involves a clear and present danger to the lives, safety or health of students or Charter School personnel. If a student is suspended without this conference, both the parent/guardian and student shall be notified of the student’s right to return to school for the purpose of a conference.

At the conference, the student shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action, the evidence against that student, the other means of correction that were attempted before the disciplinary action, and shall be given the opportunity to present that student’s version and evidence in his or her defense. This conference shall be held within two school days, unless the student waives this right or is physically unable to attend for any reason including, but not limited to, incarceration or hospitalization. No penalties may be imposed on a student for failure of the student’s parent or guardian to attend a conference with Charter School officials. Reinstatement of the suspended student shall not be contingent upon attendance by the student’s parent or guardian at the conference.

□ Notice to Parents/Guardians: At the time of the suspension, an administrator or designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian by telephone or in person. Whenever a student is suspended, the parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the suspension and the date of return following suspension. This notice shall state the specific offense committed by the student. In addition, the notice may also state the date and time when the student may return to school. If Charter School officials wish to ask the parent/guardian to confer regarding matters pertinent to the suspension, the notice may request that the parent/guardian respond to such requests without delay.

**Suspension Time Limits/Recommendation for Expulsion:** Suspensions, when not including a recommendation for expulsion, shall not exceed five (5) consecutive school days per suspension. Upon a recommendation of Expulsion by the Director or Director’s designee, the student and the student’s guardian or representative will be invited to a conference to determine if the suspension for the student should be extended pending an expulsion hearing. This determination will be made by the Director or designee upon either of the following: 1) the student’s presence will be disruptive to the education process; or 2) the student poses a threat or danger to others. Upon either determination, the student’s suspension will be extended pending the results of an expulsion hearing. If such extended suspension exceeds 10 days, the following procedures shall be followed: 1) The Superintendent shall provide timely, written notice of the charges against the student and an explanation of the student’s basic rights; 2) The School will provide a hearing adjudicated by a neutral officer within a reasonable number of days at which the student has a fair opportunity to present testimony, evidence and witnesses and confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, and at which the pupil has the right to bring legal counsel. At this hearing, it will be determined whether the presence of the student at the School would cause a danger to persons or property or a threat of disrupting the instructional process pending the results of an expulsion hearing.

Upon the request of a parent/guardian/educational rights holder/student, a teacher shall provide to a student in any of grades 1 to 12 who has been suspended from the School for two or more schooldays, the homework that the pupil would otherwise have been assigned. If a homework assignment that is requested and turned into the teacher by the student either upon the student’s return to school from suspension or within the timeframe originally prescribed by the teacher, whichever is later, is not graded before the end of the academic term, that assignment shall not be included in the calculation for the student’s overall grade in the class.

**5. Authority to Expel:** A student may be expelled either by the Charter School Board following a hearing before it or by the Charter School Board upon the recommendation of an Administrative Panel to be assigned by the Board as needed. The Administrative Panel should consist of at least three members who are certificated and neither a teacher of the student or a Board member of the Charter School’s governing board. The Administrative Panel may recommend expulsion of any student found to have committed an expellable offense.

**6. Expulsion Procedures:** Students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing to determine whether the student should be expelled. Unless postponed for good cause, the hearing shall be held within thirty (30) school days after the Director or designee determines that the Student has committed an expellable offense.

In the event an Administrative Panel hears the case, it will make a recommendation to the Board for a final decision whether to expel. The hearing shall be held in closed session (complying with all student confidentiality rules under FERPA) unless the Student makes a written request for a public hearing three (3) days prior to the hearing. Written notice of the hearing shall be forwarded to the student and the student's parent/guardian at least ten (10) calendar days before the date of the hearing. Upon mailing the notice, it shall be deemed served upon the student. The notice shall include:

1. The date and place of the expulsion hearing;
2. A statement of the specific facts, charges and offenses upon which the proposed expulsion is based;
3. A copy of the Charter School's disciplinary rules which relate to the alleged violation;
4. Notification of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to provide information about the student's status at the Charter School to any other school district or school to which the student seeks enrollment;
5. The opportunity for the student or the student's parent/guardian to appear in person or to employ and be represented by counsel or a non-attorney advisor;
6. The right to inspect and obtain copies of all documents to be used at the hearing;
7. The opportunity to present testimony, evidence and witnesses and confront and question all witnesses who testify at the hearing;
8. The opportunity to question all evidence presented and to present oral and documentary evidence on the student's behalf including witnesses.

**7. Special Procedures for Expulsion Hearings Involving Sexual Assault or Battery Offenses:** The Charter School may, upon a finding of good cause, determine that the disclosure of either the identity of the witness or the testimony of that witness at the hearing, or both, would subject the witness to an unreasonable risk of psychological or physical harm. Upon this determination, the testimony of the witness may be presented at the hearing in the form of sworn declarations that shall be examined only by the Charter School or the hearing officer. Copies of these sworn declarations, edited to delete the name and identity of the witness, shall be made available to the student.

The complaining witness in any sexual assault or battery case must be provided with a copy of the applicable disciplinary rules and advised of his/her right to (a) receive five days' notice of his/her scheduled testimony, (b) have up to two (2) adult support persons of his/her choosing present in the hearing at the time he/she testifies, which may include a parent, guardian, or legal counsel, and (c) elect to have the hearing closed while testifying.

The Charter School must also provide the victim a room separate from the hearing room for the complaining witness' use prior to and during breaks in testimony.

At the discretion of the entity conducting the expulsion hearing, the complaining witness shall be allowed periods of relief from examination and cross-examination during which he or she may leave the hearing room.

The entity conducting the expulsion hearing may also arrange the seating within the hearing room to facilitate a less intimidating environment for the complaining witness.

The entity conducting the expulsion hearing may also limit time for taking the testimony of the complaining witness to the hours he/she is normally in school, if there is no good cause to take the testimony during other hours.

Prior to a complaining witness testifying, the support persons must be admonished that the hearing is confidential. Nothing in the law precludes the person presiding over the hearing from removing a support person whom the presiding person finds is disrupting the hearing. The entity conducting the hearing may permit any one of the support persons for the complaining witness to accompany him or her to the witness stand.

If one or both of the support persons is also a witness, the Charter School must present evidence that the witness' presence is both desired by the witness and will be helpful to the Charter School. The person presiding over the hearing shall permit the witness to stay unless it is established that there is a substantial risk that the testimony of the

complaining witness would be influenced by the support person, in which case the presiding official shall admonish the support person or persons not to prompt, sway, or influence the witness in any way. Nothing shall preclude the presiding officer from exercising his or her discretion to remove a person from the hearing whom he or she believes is prompting, swaying, or influencing the witness.

The testimony of the support person shall be presented before the testimony of the complaining witness and the complaining witness shall be excluded from the courtroom during that testimony.

Especially for charges involving sexual assault or battery, if the hearing is to be conducted in public at the request of the student being expelled, the complaining witness shall have the right to have his/her testimony heard in a closed session when testifying at a public meeting would threaten serious psychological harm to the complaining witness and there are no alternative procedures to avoid the threatened harm. The alternative procedures may include videotaped depositions or contemporaneous examination in another place communicated to the hearing room by means of closed-circuit television.

Evidence of specific instances of a complaining witness' prior sexual conduct is presumed inadmissible and shall not be heard absent a determination by the person conducting the hearing that extraordinary circumstances exist requiring the evidence be heard. Before such a determination regarding extraordinary circumstance can be made, the witness shall be provided notice and an opportunity to present opposition to the introduction of the evidence. In the hearing on the admissibility of the evidence, the complaining witness shall be entitled to be represented by a parent, legal counsel, or other support person. Reputation or opinion evidence regarding the sexual behavior of the complaining witness is not admissible for any purpose.

**8. Record of Hearing:** A record of the hearing shall be made and may be maintained by any means, including electronic recording, as long as a reasonably accurate and complete written transcription of the proceedings can be made.

**9. Presentation of Evidence:** While technical rules of evidence do not apply to expulsion hearings, evidence may be admitted and used as proof only if it is the kind of evidence on which reasonable persons can rely in the conduct of serious affairs. A recommendation by the Administrative Panel to expel must be supported by substantial evidence that the student committed an expellable offense. Findings of fact shall be based solely on the evidence at the hearing. While hearsay evidence is admissible, no decision to expel shall be based solely on hearsay. Sworn declarations may be admitted as testimony from witnesses of whom the Board or Administrative Panel determines that disclosure of their identity or testimony at the hearing may subject them to an unreasonable risk of physical or psychological harm.

If, due to a written request by the expelled student, the hearing is held at a public meeting, and the charge is committing or attempting to commit a sexual assault or committing a sexual battery as defined in Education Code Section 48900, a complaining witness shall have the right to have his or her testimony heard in a session closed to the public.

The decision of the Administrative Panel shall be in the form of written findings of fact and a written recommendation to the Board who will make a final determination regarding the expulsion. The final decision by the Board shall be made within ten (10) school days following the conclusion of the hearing.

If the Administrative Panel decides not to recommend expulsion, the student shall immediately be returned to his/her educational program.

**10. Written Notice to Expel:** The Director or designee, following a decision of the Board to expel, shall send written notice of the decision to expel, including the Board's adopted findings of fact, to the student or parent/guardian. This notice shall also include the following: (a) Notice of the specific offense committed by the student; and (b) Notice of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to inform any new district in which the student seeks to enroll of the student's status with the Charter School.

The Director or designee shall send a copy of the written notice of the decision to expel to the authorizer. This notice shall include the following: (a) The student's name; and (b) The specific expellable offense committed by the student.

**11. Disciplinary Records:** The Charter School shall maintain records of all student suspensions and expulsions at the Charter School. Such records shall be made available to the authorizer upon request.

**12. Expelled Students/Alternative Education:** Students who are expelled shall be responsible for seeking alternative education programs including, but not limited to, programs within the County or their school district of residence. The Charter School shall work cooperatively with parents/guardians as requested by parents/guardians or by the school district of residence to assist with locating alternative placements during expulsion.

**13. Rehabilitation Plans:** Students who are expelled from the Charter School shall be given a rehabilitation plan upon expulsion as developed by the Board at the time of the expulsion order, which may include, but is not limited to, periodic review as well as assessment at the time of review for readmission. The rehabilitation plan should include a date not later than one year from the date of expulsion when the student may reapply to the Charter School for readmission.

**14. Readmission:** The decision to readmit a student or to admit a previously expelled student from another school district or charter school shall be in the sole discretion of the Board following a meeting with the Director or designee and the student and guardian or representative to determine whether the student has successfully completed the rehabilitation plan and to determine whether the student poses a threat to others or will be disruptive to the school environment. The Director or designee shall make a recommendation to the Board following the meeting regarding his or her determination. The student's readmission is also contingent upon the Charter School's capacity at the time the student seeks readmission.

## **Title IX Policy for Sexual Harassment**

### **I. Purpose**

Blue Ridge Academy ("School") is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful school environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972 ("Title IX") prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment, in the School's education programs and activities.

### **II. Scope and Jurisdiction**

This Policy applies only to complaints that fall within the definition of "Sexual Harassment" under Title IX. Sexual Harassment under Title IX means conduct on the basis of sex that falls within one or more of the following categories:

1. A school employee conditioning the provision of a school aid, benefit, or service on an individual's participation in unwelcomed sexual conduct.
2. Unwelcomed conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the School's education program or activity.
3. Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking (as those terms are defined in 34 CFR section 106.30).

All other sex discrimination or sexual harassment-related complaints or allegations that do not fit the definition of Sexual Harassment will be investigated through the School's Uniform Complaint Procedures. The School's Title IX Coordinator shall determine whether allegations should be investigated under this Title IX Policy or under the Uniform Complaint Procedures.

### **III. Title IX Personnel**

The School has designated the following individual as its Title IX Coordinator to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX:

Name: Samantha Haynes  
Address: 955 Stanislaus Street Maricopa, CA 93252-9779  
Phone: (805) 638-7321  
Email: samantha@theblueridgeacademy.com

The Title IX Coordinator may designate other individual(s) to fulfill all or part of their duties. In addition to the Title IX Coordinator, the following Title IX Personnel will be involved in the formal complaint process:

- **Investigator:** The individual responsible for gathering all evidence related to the complaint. This individual will create an "Investigation Report" which will summarize the relevant evidence.
- **Decision-Maker:** The individual responsible for evaluating evidence in order to make a determination regarding the formal complaint. The Decision-Maker submits a written determination of findings to the parties. The Decision-Maker cannot be the Title IX Coordinator, the Investigator, or any individual involved in the investigation of the complaint.
- **Title IX Appeals Officer:** If applicable, this individual is responsible for evaluating an appeal of the final determination. The Title IX Appeals Officer cannot be the Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, or any individual involved in the investigation of the complaint.

All Title IX Personnel will receive training in accordance with Title IX requirements. Title IX Coordinator must ensure individuals responsible for investigating a formal complaint are neutral.

### **IV. Reporting Allegations of Sexual Harassment**

Any individual (e.g., an individual who is alleged to be a victim of Sexual Harassment or a parent/guardian of a student who is alleged to be a victim of Sexual Harassment), may submit a report of Sexual Harassment to the School's Title IX Coordinator, or any other available School employee who shall immediately forward the report to the Title IX Coordinator.

Upon receiving such a report, the Title IX Coordinator will inform the complainant of the right to file a formal complaint and the process for filing a formal complaint.

A formal complaint, with the complainant's physical or digital signature, may be filed with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, or by e-mail. A complainant may use the attached Title IX form to submit a formal complaint.

### **V. The School's Initial Response to Report of Sexual Harassment**

Upon receipt of a report (written or oral) of Sexual Harassment, the Title IX Coordinator or his/her designee will take the following steps:

1. Contact Complainant and Determine Need for Supportive Measures: Title IX Coordinator will immediately contact the complainant and respondent<sup>1</sup>, whether or not a formal complaint has been filed, to discuss the availability of supportive measures to stop the harassment, protect students, and ensure access to the educational program. If a formal complaint was not filed, explain to complainant the right to file a complaint and the process for filing a formal complaint.
  - a. Supportive measures will be nondisciplinary and nonpunitive and shall be available at any point during the Title IX investigation. Supportive measures may include, but may not be limited to: wellness check-ins, counseling services, extension of deadlines or course-related adjustments, modifications of work or class schedules, or changes of work locations, leaves of absences. Title IX Coordinator is responsible for implementing the supportive measures.
2. Determine Need for Emergency Removal: Title IX Coordinator will review the facts to determine whether the respondent (either student or staff) may need to be removed from the School setting to prevent any further sexual harassment and/or maintain the safety of students and staff.
  - a. If the respondent is a student, the School may determine that removal from the educational program is justified due to an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations. The School will conduct an individualized safety and risk analysis before the removal. The School shall provide the student with notice and opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal consistent with expulsion procedures set forth in the charter. The School will comply with applicable laws concerning disciplining or expelling students with exceptional needs.
  - b. If the respondent is an employee, the employee may be placed on administrative leave during the pendency of the formal complaint process.
3. Use of Informal Resolution Process: At any time after a formal complaint has been filed, but before reaching a determination regarding responsibility, the School may offer an informal resolution process (such as a mediation) to the parties. The informal resolution process is not available where the complainant alleges that an employee sexually harassed a student.
4. Refer to Title IX Grievance Procedures or Uniform Complaint Procedures: If a formal complaint is filed, the Title IX Coordinator will review the complaint to determine whether the complaint raises allegations that fall within the definition of Sexual Harassment under Title IX as described above.

If it does, the Title IX Coordinator will initiate this Policy's Title IX Grievance Procedures. If it does not, the Title IX Coordinator will determine whether the complaint should be dismissed (as explained below) or investigated pursuant to the School's Uniform Complaint Procedures.

## **VI. Review for Mandatory or Permissive Dismissal**

Potential Dismissal of Complaint: Under certain circumstances, the Title IX Coordinator may determine that the complaint must or should be dismissed. The Title IX Coordinator should make this determination no more than **ten (10) days** from the date it receives the complaint, unless otherwise extended by the Title IX Coordinator.

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<sup>1</sup> The "complainant" is the individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute Sexual Harassment. The "respondent" shall mean the individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute Sexual Harassment.

- a. Mandatory Dismissal: The Title IX Coordinator must dismiss the formal complaint if any of the following is determined:
  - i. The alleged conduct would not constitute Sexual Harassment as defined under Title IX even if proved.
  - ii. The alleged conduct did not occur in the School’s education program or activity or did not occur against an individual in the United States.
- b. Permissive Dismissal: The Title IX Coordinator may dismiss a formal complaint if any of the following is determined:
  - i. The complainant notifies the School, in writing, that he/she would like to withdraw the complaint or any allegations in the complaint.
  - ii. The respondent is no longer enrolled in, or employed by, the School.
  - iii. Sufficient circumstances prevent the School from gathering evidence to reach a determination with regard to the complaint.
- c. Written Notice of Dismissal: If the Title IX Coordinator dismisses the complaint, he/she must send written notice of the dismissal.
  - i. The written notice should state the reason(s) for the dismissal and inform the parties of their right to appeal the dismissal of a formal complaint or any allegations in the complaint in accordance with the appeal procedures described in the “Appeals” section below.
  - ii. If the Title IX Coordinator determines the Uniform Complaint Procedures is the appropriate grievance procedure for the complainant’s allegation(s), the Title IX Coordinator shall inform the parties of the School’s intent to investigate the complaint through the Uniform Complaint Procedures policy.
  - iii. The written notice must be sent simultaneously to both parties (complainant and respondent).

## VII. Title IX Grievance Procedures

Upon receipt of a formal written complaint, the School will initiate the following Title IX Grievance Procedures. The School will complete its investigation and issue a Written Decision within **ninety (90) days of receipt of the formal complaint** unless the parties agree to an extension of time.

### Step 1: Send Written Notice of Formal Complaint

If a formal complaint is filed, the Title IX Coordinator will seek to provide the parties with a Notice of Formal Complaint **within ten (10) days of receipt of the formal complaint**. The notice shall include: (1) copy of this Policy; (2) description of allegations potentially constituting Sexual Harassment with sufficient details known at the time; (3) statement that the respondent is presumed not responsible for conduct and that a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of complaint process; (4) statement informing parties of opportunity to have an advisor of their choice and the ability to inspect and review evidence; (5) statement informing parties that they must not knowingly make false statements or submit false information.

## Step 2: Investigator Conducts Investigation

Upon receipt of the formal complaint, the Investigator will initiate the investigation process, which will consist of gathering and reviewing evidence related to the allegations. This can include, but is not limited to, interviewing parties or witnesses, as well as reviewing relevant evidence. The parties will have the right to be accompanied to any related meetings by an advisor of their choice.

## Step 3: Investigator Provides Parties Equal Opportunity to Review Gathered Evidence

Within **fifty (50) days of School's receipt of a formal complaint**, the Investigator will seek to provide both the complainant and respondent with an equal opportunity to review the evidence gathered over a period of **10 days**. The parties will have opportunities to ask the Investigator for additional relevant questions to be considered and to provide more evidence before the Investigation Report is provided to the parties.

## Step 4: Investigator Shares Investigative Report

The Investigator will prepare an Investigative Report summarizing the relevant evidence. The Investigative Report is not the School's final written decision. The Investigator will send to the parties and their advisors, if any, the Investigative Report for their review and written response within **seventy (70) days of School's receipt of the formal complaint**.

The report must offer the parties an opportunity to submit written, relevant questions that the party wants asked of any party or witness to Decision-Maker **within ten (10) days of receipt of Investigative Report**. The Decision-Maker is responsible for providing the responses (if any) to both parties to these questions.

## Step 5: Decision-Maker Issues Written Decision

The Decision-Maker will issue a Written Decision to both parties simultaneously. The Decision-Maker shall use the "preponderance of evidence" standard (i.e., it is more likely than not that the respondent committed the alleged conduct).

The written decision will include all of the following:

1. Identification of the allegations potentially constituting Sexual Harassment.
2. A description of the procedural steps taken by the School during the investigation process (e.g., notifications to the parties, interviews with parties and witnesses, site visits, or methods used to gather other evidence).
3. Findings of fact supporting the determination.
4. Conclusions regarding the application of the School's policies to the facts.
5. A statement of, and rationale for, the result as to each allegation, including a decision regarding responsibility, any disciplinary sanctions the School imposes on the respondent, and whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the School's educational program will be provided by the School to the complainant.
6. The School's procedures and permissible bases for either party to appeal the decision.

The written decision will be issued within **ninety (90) days from the receipt of the formal complaint**. The 90-day timeline may be extended if both parties agree to an extension in writing or for good cause, as defined under 34 CFR section 106.45.

### Remedies

If the School determines that the respondent engaged in Sexual Harassment, the School will provide remedies to the complainant, as appropriate. This may include supportive measures described above. Remedies may also include: transfer from a class; parent/student conference(s); positive behavior support; warnings; detention; and formal discipline, such as suspension and expulsion. When an employee is found to have committed Sexual Harassment, the School will take appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with School policies.

## **VIII. Appeals**

Either party may appeal the School's Written Decision or Dismissal of a formal complaint or any allegation in the complaint within **five (5) days of the issuance of the Written Decision**. An appeal may be made on the following bases:

1. A procedural irregularity affected the outcome.
2. New evidence that was not reasonably available at the time the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made that could affect the outcome of the matter.
3. The Title IX Coordinator, Investigator(s), or Decision-Maker(s) had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainant or respondent that affected the outcome of the matter.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the School will provide a written notification to the other party about the appeal that gives both parties a reasonable, equal opportunity to submit a written statement in support of/challenging the appeal.

The Title IX Appeals Officer (not Decision-Maker, Title IX Coordinator, or Investigator) shall issue written decision of an appeal within **thirty (30) days from the receipt of the appeal**.

## **IX. Record Keeping**

The School will maintain for a period of seven (7) years records pertaining to Title IX Sexual Harassment allegations, as well as all material used to train Title IX Personnel.



## Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Form

Instructions: This form can be completed by any individual who has knowledge of a sexual harassment conduct occurring within Blue Ridge Academy's ("School") education program or activity. Please complete the information below to the best of your ability. Should you need additional space or would like to provide documentation to support the allegations in the complaint, you can attach those to this complaint form. If you have any questions, please contact the School's Title IX Coordinator listed below.

### Contact Information and Complainant's (Person Making Complaint) Information

Full Name of Person Filing the Complaint Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Complainant's Full Name (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

### Respondent's (Accused) Information

Respondent's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the accused a student?  No  Yes

If yes, what is the student's grade and relation to complainant: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the accused a School staff member?  No  Yes  Other

If yes, what is the staff member's relation to the complainant (e.g., teacher)? \_\_\_\_\_  
If other, what is the affiliation or organization: \_\_\_\_\_

### Details of Complaint

Date of the Alleged Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Location of Alleged Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the facts underlying your complaint. Provide details such as the names of those involved, the dates of the incident, whether witnesses were present and the names of any witnesses, etc. Please provide any details which you feel might be helpful to the complaint investigator.

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Did the harassment occur within or during the School's program or activity? If so, please describe below:

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Did this incident interfere with your ability to access or participate in the School's education program or activity? If so, please describe below:

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List the individuals involved in the relevant incident(s):

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List any witnesses to the incident(s):

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**Acknowledgements**

By submitting this form to the School's Title IX Coordinator, I wish to initiate the School's formal Title IX Grievance Procedures.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Filing Complaint

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Once you have completed this form, please submit it to:

Samantha Haynes  
955 Stanislaus Street  
Maricopa, CA 93252-9779  
(805) 638-7321  
samantha@theblueridgeacademy.com

## Signature of Receipt & Acknowledgement

By signing, you are agreeing to the policies and procedures of the Parent Student Handbook including, but not limited to:

- Enrollment Requirements
- Academic Expectations
- Report Cards & Grading
- Attendance
- Non-Compliance
- Work Samples
- Technology Usage
- Testing & Assessments
- Behavioral Expectations
- Planning Amount
- Academic Integrity

Student Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_